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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING IN ALBERTA'S PUBLIC COLLEGES:
A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

BY

JOHN LEWIS KNAPP

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING IN ALBERTA'S PUBLIC COLLEGES: A QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT submitted by John Lewis Knapp in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Howard and Dorothy Knapp

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the literature on planning in postsecondary education has flourished. The more popular models of planning over the past decade have been oriented towards positivistic paradigms, strategic planning being a prime example. Although there have been criticisms, strategic forms of planning with their external orientation have been suggested to hold promise for helping postsecondary institutions respond to changing internal and external conditions.

This study was based on the premise that the elements of strategic planning should be found in effective planning activities in colleges. As a result, it sought to develop an understanding of the planning processes of public colleges in Alberta and to relate those processes to elements of strategic planning. In order to gain this understanding, the perceptions of 57 senior administrators (presidents, vice-presidents, deans, directors, and registrars) at eight public colleges in Alberta were obtained. Three officials of the Alberta Department of Advanced Education also participated in the study. Data were gathered through the use of questionnaires and structured interviews.

In this study, the construct of the institutional environment (context) for planning was explored. Factors such as the level of participation, the political nature of planning, and the structure used to facilitate planning were seen to influence the planning processes. The annual process of funding public colleges was also perceived to have an effect on the extent and quality of planning.

The major finding of this study was that planning processes in the participating colleges did not conform in all dimensions to those found in models

of strategic planning. However, this lack of conformity did not negate the fact that many of the elements of normative models of strategic planning were present. Current planning processes would be enhanced if greater efforts were aimed at linking budgets to strategic plans, and if clear, well-articulated planning processes involving all constituents were prepared. Participants also proposed that colleges become more entrepreneurial in nature, especially in terms of resource acquisition, in order to respond to changing environments in ways that are more than incremental.

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Chapter 1

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Over the past decade (1980-90), postsecondary institutions in Canada have experienced many tensions. Sibley (1987) cited a respected Canadian minister responsible for university matters as suggesting that "the universities just don't have a credible system of decision making. They can't adapt to change and they seem incapable of reforming themselves. I foresee for them just two possibilities--either slow strangulation or radical surgery" (p. 121). In Alberta, the Department of Advanced Education (1989) produced a document which outlined some of the trends and issues that have potential influence on the postsecondary educational sector of that province for the period 1989-2000. Many of the trends identified in that document also suggest a need for reform.

Similar concern with respect to external factors exerting pressure on postsecondary educational institutions has been expressed in the United States. According to Meeca and Morrison (1988), "In the past two decades, the environment of . . . educational organizations may be best described as chaotic and turbulent" (p. 4). This condition in the environment appears to be associated with a number of factors in both countries such as calls by federal, provincial, and state governments for increased accountability, changes in the perception of the public with respect to the role of postsecondary institutions, and changes in demographic characteristics of the traditional pool from which postsecondary institutions have drawn their students (Keller, 1983; Chaffee, 1984; Bryson, 1989; Chaffee, 1989). According to Heydinger (1985),

> Perhaps at no point in history have so many forces come together to influence the course of postsecondary education. . . . To cite a few:
>
> . a declining youth cohort,
> . an aging faculty,
> . a rapidly changing technology base that demands unprecedented amounts of new equipment,
> . a revolution in telecommunications and information systems,
> . a rapidly decreasing half-life of career obsolescence, and
> . a growing recognition by society of the relationship between economic development and the quality of education and scholarship. (p. 39)

It would appear that many of the factors associated with the tensions that affect postsecondary educational institutions are embedded in the external environment of these organizations. A clearer understanding of the current state of these elements was essential background for this study. In the following section, several of these important factors are discussed.

Current Conditions in the External Environment

Many postsecondary institutions are motivated to consider planning in reaction to events occurring around them. As Keller (1983) pointed out,

> three-quarters of all change at most institutions of higher learning is now triggered by outside factors such as directives from the state board of higher education, an economic recession, migration patterns, a change in the supply of gasoline . . . a governor's change in politics, a new law from Washington, a sweeping court decision about a major affirmative action case, and the shifts in the job market. (p. 145)

He suggested that the situation in higher education today can be termed "revolutionary" and proposed that "This is an era for educational planning. At the same time that institutions have to deal with cutbacks and decline, they are being pounded by several assaults on their present structure and programs and by demands for overhaul and change" (p. 12). He saw existence of the following six major forces and shifts:

1. the changing student clientele,
2. the disintegrating college curriculum (the downfall of the liberal arts curriculum),
3. the increase in competition within higher education,
4. the technological imperative (electronic advances that influence the delivery of curriculum),
5. the faculty conundrum (the aging of faculty), and
6. the tightening grip of outside controls. (pp. 12-26)

Keller was not alone in his suggestion that change was imminent for postsecondary educational institutions. For example, Morrison and Renfro (1984) proposed that:

> Ominous clouds threaten higher education as it exists today. Almost all American colleges and universities are faced with the necessity of retrenchment and budget cuts, constricting finances, new legislation and regulation, increased competition, and changing markets where some degree programs are overflowing and other degree programs are half-full. Such uncertainty makes it more and more evident that the traditional planning methods, with their inward focus, are inadequate for our world as we know it today. (p. 2)

In essence, the "clouds" referred to here form an appropriate metaphor for the environmental factors that surround postsecondary institutions. A taxonomy to examine this metaphor has been given by Jonsen (1986) who suggested that the environment surrounding postsecondary educational institutions consists of demographic, economic, political, organizational, technical, and social elements. This taxonomy forms the basis of this section.

The Demographic Environment

A report prepared by Alberta Advanced Education (1989) suggested that the number of people in the traditional college-age category (18 to 24) would decrease in number, hitting a trough in 1990 that would last for about six years. Further, the number of individuals in this group would decline over the next 15 years by about 25%. This prediction was supported for the U.S. by Chaffee (1989) when she indicated that

> The number of high school seniors will continue to decline for a few years, generally followed by annual increases. Whether such increases will translate into enrolments depends importantly on whether society prepares and inspires students of color for postsecondary education. (p. 1)

According to Spencer (cited in Kaufman, 1986), the traditional group of college-age individuals is at an all time high in the United States and will soon decline. As for the 25-29 age category, the Alberta Department of Advanced Education suggested a decline in its size which will last until the end of the 1990s. This agency also predicted that the "echo baby boom" will reach a peak around the year 2000. As a result of these trends, at the turn of the century there is likely to be a large population of individuals in the postsecondary system in Canada. Moreover, Alberta Advanced Education (1989) suggested that 64% of all jobs created in Canada between 1986 and 2000 will require more than 12 years of education (half will require more than 17 years).

The attitude that is held by the public regarding postsecondary education is also an important demographic variable. As Heydinger (1985) stated, "although demography is the engine that drives enrolment, the slope of the enrolment curve will be influenced by people's attitudes and reactions to postsecondary education" (p. 39). If jobs are not available for postsecondary graduates or if the public becomes disgruntled with the quality of education, the projected enrolment downturn referred to above could be accelerated. Further, Kaufman (1986) indicated that participation rates have levelled off so that "without some dramatic change in participation, the demographics will not fuel growth" (p. 30).

The Economic Environment

Keller (1983) projected an ominous future for postsecondary education when he suggested that "A spectre is haunting higher education: the spectre of decline and bankruptcy" (p. 3). These words were somewhat prophetic. Over the period 1975 to 1985, 49 private colleges and universities in the United States were closed. At the same time, most institutions of higher education have continued to operate under financial hardship.

The economic environment has had affects on postsecondary institutions in a number of ways. To the extent that these organizations receive a large portion of their funding from government sources, they have been negatively effected by governments' attempts to deal with rising deficits. The recessions in recent years have produced unclear results (Jonsen, 1986). For some individuals, these recessionary times were seen as an opportunity to improve their level of formal education, while for others, the postsecondary education experience had to be postponed. A result of reduced funding available to institutions is that they are faced with few alternatives aside from raising tuition fees. According to Heydinger

(1985), "as the cost of postsecondary education begins to disenfranchise certain segments of the population, severe public reactions could result, calling the cost-effectiveness of higher education into question and creating demands for organizational restructuring" (p. 43).

According to Easterby-Smith (1987), one of the consequences of added pressure for postsecondary institutions to be more self-sufficient and therefore responsive to the needs of the customer is the direct economic competition of one institution with another. This phenomenon has resulted in the suggestion that postsecondary institutions must seriously consider the role of marketing (Kotler and Murphy, 1981; Trachtenberg, 1985; Michael, 1991). Therefore, changing economic conditions have forced many postsecondary educational institutions in Canada to consider very seriously what their priorities are, and what business they are and should be in. As Ell (1988) discovered, faculty in these institutions had definite views with respect to the appropriate responses in times of retrenchment.

The Political Environment

All public postsecondary institutions rely to a significant degree on government funding. To the extent that these institutions are dependent on public funds, they are effected by the budgetary processes of governments and are subject to their priorities. These processes, which are generally tied to annual funding allocations, increase both the difficulty and uncertainty of the postsecondary planning process.

The larger issue of the legitimacy of government intervention is receiving considerable attention (The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1987). All board-governed institutions become involved in the political process when appointments are made to their boards. According to Jonsen (1986), "as colleges and universities have become more important social institutions, those appointments have tended to become somewhat more political" (p. 11). This (political) element of the "cloud" surrounding postsecondary institutions is one that cannot be ignored.

In Canada, Established Programs Financing is a mechanism through which the federal government transfers funds to the provincial governments for assistance in the financing of health, social, and education programs. The provinces view these as "unconditional transfers" to be allocated according to the priorities of the province. The federal government, however, indicates that the funds should be used according to their directives. Federal officials have suggested that less than 100% of the funds are actually being put to their intended use (Stewart, 1987). The provinces argue that they have the authority to decide on the allocation of these funds. In terms of the funds earmarked for education, the issue then becomes one of the extent to which the federal government should become involved in postsecondary education since by law it is a provincial matter. This is further complicated by the high rate of mobility of Canadians. People who have received their postsecondary education in one province relocate to other provinces to become employed. The educational costs incurred in the first province are not offset by subsequent provincial income tax revenues from that individual. The federal budget of February, 1990 further heightened this tension when transfer payments to the provinces were reduced.

Additional support for the importance accorded to the role of governments with respect to the operations of postsecondary educational institutions is given by Dennison and Gallagher (1986). In the context of planning, they stated that

> In college systems in which governments play so central a role, expectations that governments have for colleges need to be as clear and as comprehensible as institutional plans. . . . Governments in Canada are not well known for the precision or permanence of their policy statements; nor are they well known for their use of participatory processes for policy development and articulation. As a result, colleges have no choice but to be sensitive to the vagaries of political reality if they are to function effectively within provincial systems. (p. 256)

The Organizational Environment

Jonsen (1986) used the term Organizational Environment to refer the fact that postsecondary institutions are part of a system of higher education. The term System Environment may have been more appropriate. Regardless, this environmental component indicates that in most cases, postsecondary institutions relate either directly or indirectly to other institutions. The boundaries between these organizations have become somewhat "permeable." According to Jonsen (1986),

> Higher education has become increasingly more permeable, in the sense of the increased ability and inclination of students to move back and forth among institutions. . . . This permeability is an educational phenomenon in that the educational system increasingly needs to be structured so that certain parts articulate with others . . . to accommodate the transfer of students. (p. 12)

The result of these permeable boundaries is that postsecondary institutions cannot perform their current activities, nor make plans for the future, without regard for other institutions in the same geographic and programming area. Each institution must define its position in the system of postsecondary education. In most publicly funded postsecondary systems, that position to a large extent is influenced by the funding agency. The presence of other postsecondary institutions in the same "market" makes it imperative that planners use a systems approach and position their institutions strategically (Trachtenberg, 1985). Kotler (1981, 1985) suggested that, in part as a result of this relationship to other institutions, postsecondary educational institutions should consider the development of marketing strategies in ways similar to the private sector.

For postsecondary educational institutions, competition for students comes not only from other formal institutions but also from other sources. For example, Heydinger (1985) suggested that in the United States more than 50% of postsecondary education takes place outside the traditional college and university.

The Technological Environment

There are rapid technological changes in the instructional delivery mechanisms available in the postsecondary setting. An important issue is the relative importance of placing scarce resources into delivery systems of the future in order to "meet the competition" or to concentrate on curriculum content. Some of these technological changes were summarized by Jonsen (1986):

> The development of new instruments (such as interactive videodiscs), new delivery systems (such as cable and low-power television), and new means of distance delivery (such as satellite), as well as the mass production of what were once large-scale and expensive facilities (such as computers), contain

> profound implications for the ways in which higher education does business. (p. 13)

These implications relate to a potential change from labor-intensive instruction to capital-intensive methods of instruction, changes in the type, frequency, and form of faculty-student interactions, and potential changes in the role of the traditional campus where teaching and research have tended to be centralized. In essence, changes in the technological environment affect the core of the institution's existence. Technological changes in the workplace imply that there is an expanding need for the training and re-training of employees (Alberta Advanced Education, 1989). This must be accomplished on equipment that is increasingly complicated and expensive and comes at a time when, as suggested above, the real operating budgets of these institutions are being reduced. In addition, these organizations are being asked to produce more and higher quality research, and also to interact on an ever-increasing level with the communities in which they operate and the several publics which they serve. Obviously, increased research and interaction with these communities and publics puts significant additional stress on already taxed capital and operational budgets.

The Social Environment

There have been significant changes in the social/cultural component of the external environment. According to Jonsen (1986),

> Colleges have been used to dealing in a social environment that was fairly homogenous, drawing students from a single socioeconomic stratum, a single religious background, or a single geographic region. The democratization of access, the diversification of programs, and the fierce competition for students in recent years have made the social environment reasonably

> complex. (p. 14)

The view that people are "lifelong" learners, interspersing work and formal education has to be acknowledged. This change forces educators to improve both research and the delivery systems they are using at a time of contracting budgets. Commitments to accessibility by funding agencies place increased pressures on the capabilities of the postsecondary system.

It is not sufficient to be alert to changes in the demographic characteristics of the student pool, but transformations to the psychographic profile of society must be also be noted. As Heydinger (1985) pointed out, "we must be more systematic in monitoring the changing values of the high school-age population" (p. 42). He gave examples of studies that showed that the freshmen of today are more materialistic and less altruistic that they were ten years ago. He suggested that postsecondary administrators pay closer attention to the reasons for students' taking higher education as well as the skill and expectations they bring with them.

The Postsecondary Response

The response of many postsecondary educational institutions to these internal and external forces of change has been to react by making what seems to be "knee jerk" decisions as opposed to carefully thought out, proactive ones based on thorough analysis of the factors leading to the current dilemma (Lang, 1987). For these institutions, little effort has gone into analyzing trends and issues that have precipitated the current problems nor have they evaluated these trends and issues for potential future impacts. Historically, institutional planning at the postsecondary level has had a focus that was internal, and short-term. A more effective set of planning processes for postsecondary educational institutions is required.

Over the last decade, a model for institutional planning has evolved that is suggested to hold promise in terms of dealing with the turbulent environment referred to above. That model is *strategic planning*. As John S. Toll, President of the University of Maryland stated:

> We believe that planning may be the most important activity in higher education in the 1980s. . . . Planning is not new for higher education. Educators planned for the enrolment growth of the 1950s and 1960s. We planned for new academic programs, from courses in Chinese, dance, . . . to economic development. Planning became integrated with the development of annual budgets at most institutions. But now planning needs a long view and should also be increasingly comprehensive. And it should be strategic. (Toll, 1982, pp. 36-37)

Toll suggested, therefore, that traditional institutional planning processes at the postsecondary level are not going to be effective in dealing with the turbulent and uncertain environment, and that strategic planning is the model of choice for today's administrators. His prime motivation for this assertion was that strategic planning processes attempt to provide a match between the strengths of the institution and the opportunities that exist in the environment.

Purposes of the Study

The current state of affairs in postsecondary educational institutions is that there are pressures in the external environment, and unique nomothetic and idiographic dimensions internally that make planning in these organizations an onerous task. There are suggestions that historical institutional planning practices are not effective antidotes today, especially with respect to the turbulence in the external environment. This turbulence causes changes for postsecondary institutions that are rapid, conflicting, and unexpected. It been suggested, however, that strategic planning processes provide some promise (Keller, 1983; Cope, 1987). Based on this, the purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the planning practices of the public college sector of the Alberta postsecondary system conformed to the procedures associated with the strategic planning models developed and applied primarily in the United States, Australia, and Great Britain. As well, the issue of the environment of planning (context) in colleges was examined since the literature indicated that the quality and extent of planning activities were to some extent influenced by factors such as the level of participation in, and the political nature of the planning processes themselves. To focus the direction of this study, a general research question was prepared. It was:

> *Under conditions of change in the internal and external environments of colleges, what planning efforts are being undertaken, what characteristics of effective planning are evident, and how might planning in colleges be improved?*

In addition to this general research question, the following specific research questions were used to guide the acquisition of relevant information.

The Context of Planning

1. What factors, internal and external to the college, motivate planning?
2. What effect does the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process have on college planning activities?

3. To what extent are college planning activities political in nature?

4. What structure is used to facilitate college planning? To what extent does the President lead the process?

5. To what extent are college planning processes participative? To what extent do participants receive feedback with respect to their contributions to the planning process?

The Process of Planning

6. To what extent is the college mission statement an integral part of the planning process?

7. Is a clear and articulated vision of what the college is to become central to college planning?

8. To what extent and in what ways are internal factors assessed as part of college planning activities?

9. To what extent and in what ways are factors external to the college assessed as part of college planning activities?

10. Do planning processes include efforts aimed at prioritizing alternative strategies?

11. Do colleges include department-level plans in attempts to operationalize their planning processes?

12. To what extent are resource allocation decisions an integral part of college planning?

13. To what extent do colleges engage in processes of evaluation after plans have been implemented?

14. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of current planning practices? What improvements are recommended?

The Conceptual Framework

The approach relative to the central issue of this study is summarized in the conceptual framework which was developed for this research and is presented as a flow model in Figure 1.1. As noted in this figure, colleges respond by developing plans based on the internal and external forces acting on them. The essence of this conceptual frame is whether or not institutional planning practices in the public college sector in Alberta match the processes associated with normative models of strategic planning as described in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.2). If they do, then the question is to what extent are they perceived to be effective by those responsible for their implementation at the institutional level. If they are perceived to be effective, then the flow diagram suggests proceeding along path 1 which is a continuation of existing planning practices. If they are not effective, then path 2 should be taken which proposes an examination of the causes for their ineffectiveness.

Current institutional planning practices in the public colleges in Alberta may not match those found in the strategic planning models. Even if they do not, the effectiveness of these planning practices is still an important question. In the case where they are perceived not to be effective, the conceptual framework suggests path 3 be taken which would have existing planning processes altered. However, if the current planning procedures do not match those associated with strategic planning, they could still be effective. In this case, path 4 should be taken. This suggests a continuation of existing processes and the addition of new elements from practice to existing theoretical models. The conceptual framework, therefore, has a dynamic quality which would have institutional planning practices in these colleges continuously compared to an evolving set of processes that

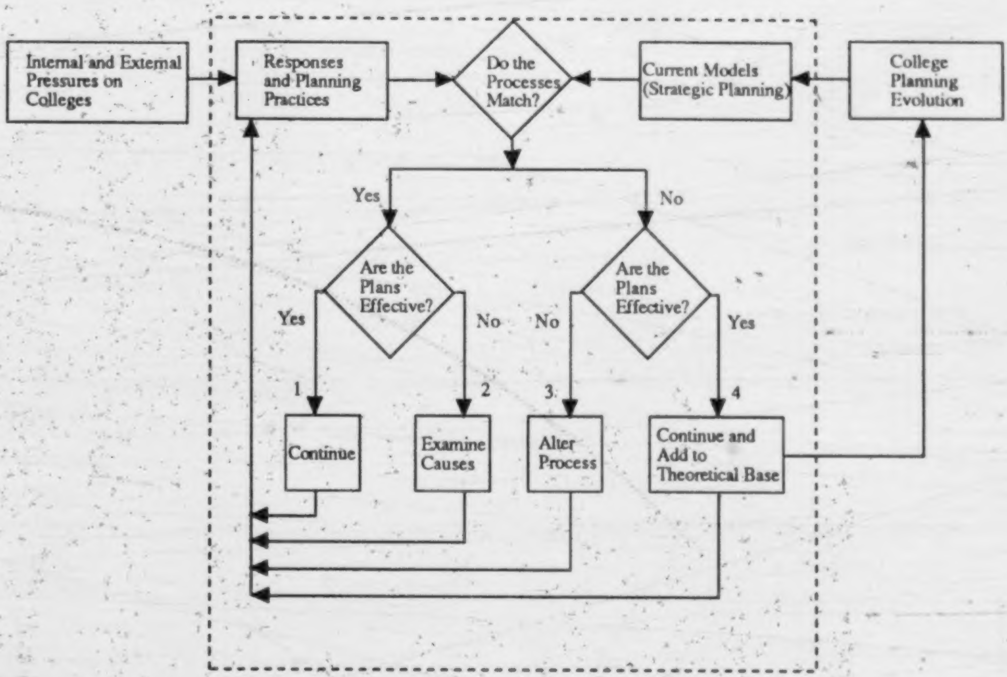
Internal and External Pressures on Colleges
Responses and Planning Practices
Do the Processes Match?
Current Models (Strategic Planning)
College Planning Evolution
Yes
No
Are the Plans Effective?
Yes
No
No
Are the Plans Effective?
Yes
1
2
3
4
Continue
Examine Causes
Alter Process
Continue and Add to Theoretical Base

Figure 1.1. *A conceptual framework for comparing the institutional planning practices of public colleges in Alberta with strategic planning processes*

represent current educational planning models. The research attempted to clarify the kind of institutional planning that existed in these colleges, as well as identify deficiencies in that planning when compared to the current, strategic planning models presented in the literature.

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to have implications for both practice and theory. The practical dimensions should be of interest to those individuals in public colleges charged with the responsibility of determining the overall direction of the institution. Many of the studies conducted to date and reported in the literature are American, and as such have limited applicability to the Canadian postsecondary scene. This study should assist senior administrators in their search for approaches to planning in the predominately publicly funded system of colleges in Alberta. As well, the Alberta Department of Advanced Education could view this study as one more dimension of (indirect) dialogue with the public college sector in the province. Concerns and issues related to planning in this segment of the system are relayed in this study.

This study also contains topic/issues of interest to researchers. Alternative approaches to planning have received considerable attention in the last decade in research articles and studies. Many of these studies have focused on effective means of planning in postsecondary education in the United States. This study tests elements of the rational strategic planning model in a Canadian public college environment, and points out some areas that require additional research.

Possibly, new approaches to effective planning are required in institutions that are publicly funded as opposed to those with a private base of funding. Researchers are challenged to examine this and other issues as result of this study.

Definition of Terms

For purposes of clarity and understanding, a number of the terms that are used in this study are defined.

Planning: A conscious process by which an institution assesses its current state and the likely future condition of its environment, identifies possible future states for itself, and then develops organizational strategies, policies, and procedures for selecting and getting to one or more of them. (Peterson, 1980, p. 114)

Process: A continuing, consistent, if not repetitive, sequence of events over time during which the participants can get to know one another, come to share a common vocabulary, and establish a sense of order in the life of the enterprise. (Fryer and Lovas, 1991, p. 43)

Strategic Planning: An analytical approach that encompasses an assessment of the future (usually five to ten years ahead), the determination of the desired goals in the context of the future, the development of alternative courses of action to achieve those goals, and the selection of courses of action from among those alternatives. (Uhl, 1983a, pp. 1-2).

Operational Planning: Establishing short-range plans at the department or unit level (usually for the coming budget year or two), that are based on a set of prioritized long-term plans, and are complete with resources allocated to them.

Operational planning is used interchangeably with tactical planning.

Major Assumptions

It was assumed in this study that planning was one of the major, ongoing functions of management. As a result, there would be evidence of various forms of planning in the institutions that participated in this study. It was also assumed that, since planning was a component of the management function, senior managers/administrators in the colleges would be in a position to describe those elements which characterized planning in its various forms. In this regard, it was also assumed that those individuals would be willing to share their views and knowledge regarding planning, given assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to the postsecondary system of education in the Province of Alberta, to the public college sector of that system, and to eight institutions in this sector. Only those colleges in which the number of students enrolled in full-time programs was greater than 1000 were included. The study focused primarily on current planning practices and as such was not an historical account of institutional planning in the postsecondary educational system in the Province. The study was further delimited to those participants active in the planning process in each college as opposed to all stakeholders. Focus was upon planning at the institutional level and not at the faculty or department/divisional levels. The study focused on those individuals in the colleges who were involved in the planning process and not on those effected by the planning process.

Limitations

One of the limitations that was part of this study was that the results could not be generalized to make inferences to the broader postsecondary educational system. The study was descriptive of only those institutions that were under investigation. A second limitation of this study was that since, at the time of the study the postsecondary educational institutions in the province were required to provide development plans, their planning activities in this regard were not natural but in some cases are coerced. Third, quality strategic planning activities at the faculty or department/divisional levels were not considered since the institution at the macro-level was the focus of this study. The reactions and perceptions of those affected by the planning process (other administrators, faculty, support staff, and students) were not measured in this study.

Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 of this thesis presents the background (situational analysis) for the study. In addition, this chapter describes the purpose of the study, the general and specific research questions which guided the acquisition of data for the study, the significance of the study, definitions of important key words or phrases, the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study, and the organization of the thesis. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant literature in terms of alternative approaches to planning for postsecondary institutions, the strengths and weaknesses of strategic planning, and a normative model of strategic planning that could be applied to public colleges. This model formed the basis of the specific research questions. Chapter 3 outlines the research design that was used in this study.

The results of the study are presented in Chapters 4 to 6. Chapter 4 gives study results related to the context of planning, Chapter 5 provides results for the process of planning, and Chapter 6 is a synthesis and analysis of the results of Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 7 of this study draws conclusions and suggests implications for practice, theory, and further research.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As noted in Chapter 1, the current state of affairs in postsecondary education can be described as somewhat chaotic. There are internal and external pressures that cause institutions to respond and make changes in order to cope. Toll (1982) proposed that past attempts and approaches to planning were not going to be effective in responding to the challenges of the next decades. He suggested that postsecondary institutions consider strategic planning with its external, proactive focus as the basis of planning. Whether or not the planning responses of public colleges in Alberta corresponded to those associated with normative strategic planning processes was the focus of this study. This chapter reviews the literature as it relates to planning in postsecondary institutional settings and examines both the positive and negative dimensions of the strategic planning approach.

Introduction

Toll (1982) observed that planning was not a new activity for postsecondary educational institutions. Planning practices and models have evolved over time, as indicated in the conceptual framework outlined in Figure 1.1. Both the practices of planning and the theoretical constructs upon which they are based reflect different opinions and views. The literature surveyed in this chapter relates to both the practical and theoretical dimensions of planning. Table 2.1 and the discussion related to it are a presentation of 14 planning innovations that Winstead and Ruff (1986) observed have occurred over the past five decades. Some of these innovations were in vogue for a short period, while others were incorporated into subsequent approaches. As shown in Table 2.1, the current innovation is strategic planning.

Planning from a theoretical perspective is also presented in this chapter. Although a number of planning models and paradigms are discussed, a review of the literature leads one to conclude that rational/formal processes tend to be the most popular. Strategic planning is one such approach. Since the literature related to both practice and theory indicates that strategic planning currently is the preferred basis of institutional response, a normative model of strategic planning which was used to guide this study is presented in this chapter.

The Evolution of Institutional Planning Processes: A Summary

Winstead and Ruff (1986) analyzed the evolution of institutional planning approaches as they applied to postsecondary education. They identified 14 planning innovations that have taken place since the 1930s (Table 2.1). These are briefly summarized here.

Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting (POSDCoRB)

The acronym POSDCoRB was coined by Gulick (1937) and was meant to describe the functional elements of the total scope of involvements of the chief executive officer. The focal point of this approach, however, was planning and

Table 2.1

The Evolution of Institutional Planning Processes

Time Period	Planning Innovation	Added Dimension
1930s to 1940s	Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting (POSDCoRB)	Planning as a Management Function
1940s	Formal Planning	Discrete Documentation of Planning
1950s	Long Range Planning	Extrapolation Forward and Use of a Planning Specialist
1950s to early 1960s	Master Planning	A Look at the Total Picture
Mid-1950s to Mid-1960s	Contingency Planning	Asking "What if" With Alternative Solutions
Late 1950s to Mid-1960s	Systematic Planning	How Factors Interrelate
1960s	Program Planning and Budgeting (PPBS)	Emphasis on Programmatic Information Rather than Line Items
1960s	Program Evaluation Review Technique (PERT)	Network Analysis
Mid-1960s to Mid-1970s	Management by Objectives (MBO)	Emphasis on Results and Accountability
Late 1960s to early 1970s	Delphi Studies	Consensus Building
Mid-1970s	Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB)	Total Program Justification
1970s and 1980s	Futures Research	Alternative Scenarios
Early 1980s	Quality Circles	Staff Input into Decision Making
Late 1970s to Present	Strategic Planning	Environmental Assessment

Source: Winstead, P. & Ruff, D. (1986). *The evolution of institutional planning models in higher education.* (ERIC Document Research Service No. ED 280 412)

Gulick clearly wished to ascribe the role of planning to the function of management. Most of his work was aimed at the federal government, and was prevalent over the period of the 1930s and 1940s. According to Winstead and Ruff (1986, p. 27), the implications of this era for planning in postsecondary education was that:

> . . . if planning is a legitimate function of management and sound management techniques are applicable to higher education, then planning is an appropriate administrative task for college and university administrators. POSDCoRB thus becomes the origin of the planning function for educational institutions as well as government and other nonprofit organizations.

Formal Planning

This innovation in the evolution of institutional planning added structure and documentation to the process of planning. It was fashioned after the procedures of the time which emphasized rigorous analysis designed to enhance planning. The influence of planners involved with the Second World War was felt here since the formal planning stage took place during and shortly after this. As Winstead and Ruff (1986) suggested "As higher education institutions began to expand after World War II and became more complex, formal planning became a part of their administrative structure" (p. 28).

Long-range Planning

Long-range planning stressed the importance of issues that were further into the future and could influence an organization's direction. Planning in the 1950s era was characterized by the employment of planning specialists who used primarily quantitative techniques to derive forward extrapolations of existing circumstances. For the postsecondary education sector, Winstead and Ruff (1986) proposed that long-range planning "institutionalized the role of the planning office and the planning specialist. Planning as a specialty then began to utilize various extrapolation and predictive models as a part of its methodology." (p. 29)

Master Planning

This planning innovation made important contributions to the postsecondary sector. Master planning emphasised the integration of all the parts into the whole system as well as stressed the importance of future trends. As a procedure, it provided a way for the strategic, administrative, and operating functions of the organization to be integrated. Popular in the period of the 1950s to the early 1960s, master planning forced government agencies to view the postsecondary education institutions as a system rather than disparate parts and to examine future trends for the system as a whole.

Contingency Planning

Contingency planning evolved as the result of the need for planners to ask the "what if" questions and then to build alterative scenarios. It was popularized during the period of the mid-1950s to mid-1960s when, according to Winstead and Ruff (1986), "it was realized that the future is seldom like the past and the occurrence of unpredictable events is a reality of institutional life. It was designed to shorten reaction time" (p. 31).

In terms of postsecondary institutions, contingency planning applied to two distinct fields. The first of these was the area of finances in which planners were asked to prepare plans which were based on reduced financial resources, the same financial resources, and increased financial resources. In this way, their reaction time was reduced when realized financial data were available. The second application of contingency planning related to alternative action steps to be taken in the event that certain occurrences were realized (especially significant during student upheavals of the 1960s).

Systematic Planning

This planning approach resulted from systems theory which viewed an organization as a set of interrelated parts designed to function as a whole in order to accomplish some predetermined goal or objective. This type of planning focused on the mission of the institution and determined whether or not it was being achieved and whether or not it needed altering. Postsecondary institutions engaged in this activity during the late 1950s to mid-1960s with the recognition that "different parts of the institution affect each other and that change in one part usually creates change in another" (Winstead and Ruff, 1986, p. 32).

Programming Planning and Budgeting Systems (PPBS)

This innovation in planning was designed primarily in the military with a view to providing decision makers with sufficient financial information so that the monetary implication of each decision might be known. This technique was used extensively during the 1960s. According to Winstead and Ruff (1986) the implication of this planning innovation for postsecondary education was that:

> PPBS was a popular concept with leaders of government and business who quickly suggested, for accountability reasons, that it be applied by educators

> to the educational programs supported by society. PPBS had merit for higher education because it combined planning and budgeting in a way that shifted the emphasis from line item budgeting to the financial and educational implications of total programs. (p. 33)

Program Evaluation Review Technique (PERT)

This planning innovation, developed during the second world war, had some application to postsecondary education during the mid-1960s due to its focus on the interrelation of interactive parts. Since PERT focused on paths, goals, and time lines, it allowed planners for example to manage the start-up of the academic programs at new facilities and to coordinate complicated research activities.

Management by Objectives (MBO)

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, MBO was seen as way of managing organizations by focusing on outcomes (ends) rather than on the means. The necessary condition for this planning approach to be effective was for a clear articulation of the institution's goals. It was applied in postsecondary institutions during this period because it was clear that these organizations were complex and this (MBO) approach assisted in making individuals, programs, departments, and faculties accountable.

Delphi Studies

This technique, aimed at achieving consensus about future issues on the part of experts, was most popular in the postsecondary educational system between the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Winstead and Ruff (1986) it could be used by

> . . . colleges and universities in goal setting and/or program development

> when there is great diversity among key constituent groups or considerable differences of opinion on program needs or direction. Issues involving faculty, administration, students, trustees, etc., often meet these criteria. (p. 36)

Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB)

The basic premise of ZBB was that any new budgets that were prepared did not become based on the previous year's budget, but rather all financial values were determined as if the organization were a new one. ZBB was most popular during the mid-1970s. The authors saw ZBB as having important implications for postsecondary institutions if, as part of the budgeting process, "a college or university can define, study, and select the best alternatives for each fiscal period based on the institution's mission, goals, and objectives" (p. 37).

Futures Research

The main feature of futures research is that it forces planners to develop alternative scenarios regarding the future based on trends and issues. It uses such techniques as brainstorming and cross-impact analysis to develop alternative scenarios about the future. As well, probabilities are attached to each prediction. Popularized during the 1970s and 1980s, this planning technique "when combined with other aspects of planning, can allow schools to approach the future with considerably more understanding and confidence" (Winstead and Ruff, 1986, p. 38).

Quality Circles

According to Winstead and Ruff (1986), quality circles could be defined as small groups of employees who meet together on a regular, volunteer basis to analyze concerns and issues in their area and to articulate these, along with any potential solutions, to management. This participative management system started in the early 1980s and has the potential to assist the planning activities in postsecondary educational institutions by involving a broad base of individuals in the process.

Strategic Planning

The main features of strategic planning are that it focuses on the environment, assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and designs plans which attempt to provide the best fit between the organization and its environment. The application of this process to postsecondary educational institutions began in the late 1970s and is still popular today. According to Winstead and Ruff (1986), strategic planning

> . . . was seen as advantageous for colleges and universities as the population of the traditional college-age student declined forcing institutions of higher education to be more image conscious, market aware, and more competitive in their student recruitment. Institutions need a more systematic way to plan for and meet the contingencies of the outside environment. Strategic planning is seen as a way to meet this need. (p. 40)

The foregoing has been an overview of the historical developments with respect to planning in postsecondary education. The following section provides a brief summary of some of the theoretical underpinnings to current planning processes.

Planning Models and Paradigms

According to Peterson (1980), planning can be defined as "a conscious process by which an institution assesses its current state and the likely future condition of its environment, identifies possible future states for itself, and then develops organizational strategies, policies, and procedures for selecting and getting to one or more of them" (p. 114). Peterson suggested that although there is no one best model for planning, the one which is chosen should accommodate the traditions, governance and administrative style, and the problems facing the institution. He further suggested that the predominant paradigm of planning for each postsecondary institution depends upon the perception of senior administrators with respect to the basic institutional unit for which the plans are to be developed. Peterson proposed that the institutional units could be viewed alternatively as

> 1. a set of formally devised responsibilities and offices and well-defined process and structures related to them,
>
> 2. a collection of individuals and groups with their own needs, abilities, and natural but related activity patterns and interests,
>
> 3. an array of members' attitudes, opinions, and values, which reflect a set of belief systems,
>
> 4. a well-defined, quantifiable set of clients, members, and resources organized around tasks, functions, and product or output services,
>
> 5. a set of interest groups organized around issues that may conflict and/or change, or
>
> 6. a collection of individuals or groups that are autonomous and self-directed. (p. 117)

These six different perceptions of planning units suggest six different theories or models as they relate to planning in postsecondary institutions. According to Peterson (1980), these models are the formal-rational model, the organizational development model, the technocratic/empirical model, the philosophical synthesis model, the political advocacy model, and the coordinated anarchy model. Each of these is described in turn in the following section.

Formal-rational Model

The formal-rational model is the most complete and widely accepted approach to planning in postsecondary education today. According to Peterson (1980), this model and the paradigm upon which it is based

> . . . assume a rational, comprehensive sequence of planning elements and includes the formulation of institutional mission based on a situational appraisal, development of goals and objectives, establishment of broad program and resource strategies, selection and design of action programs, implementation, and review. (p. 127)

The basis of this model is an assumption that the mission and objectives can be formulated and that they will guide the planning process. The requirement of this model is formal offices, processes, and structures, and a significant level of planning expertise. In this model, both internal and external assessments are performed. An advantage of this approach to planning is that it is highly visible and provides continuity to the process, while disadvantages relate to its high cost of financial and human planning capital, and the potential for incremental as opposed to fundamental changes as a result of the planning exercise. Strategic planning could be labelled a formal-rational model.

Organizational Development Model

The organizational development model has its roots in the human relations school and is based on a rational paradigm similar to that of the formal-rational model of planning. The difference, however, is that the organizational development school is far less concerned with formal processes. Instead, "it begins with a focus on the organization as composed of individuals or natural human groups whose needs, abilities, attitudes, and activities make up the social, cultural, and activity patterns of the institution" (Peterson, 1980, p. 133). Decisions are generally made through collaborative interaction as a result of group learning and rational problem-solving approaches. For the most part, this planning model tends to be internal-oriented with the potential exclusion of external factors and as result may focus more on the tactical, short term solutions problems rather than on long-term, strategic ones. It does, however, have potential for approaching planning from the perspective of change.

Technocratic/Empirical Model

The emphasis of the technocratic/empirical approach to planning is on technique. As such, Peterson (1980) suggested that it was not a bona fide planning model but did warrant consideration due to its popularity and focus on technique. The basic assumption with this approach is that the units of the institution are quantifiable, the resources are clearly defined, and the units and the resources are linked in clear ways. In the technocratic/empirical approach, problems are solved through rational analysis using techniques such as environmental scanning, trend analysis, forecasting, the Delphi process, and budget analysis. In order to utilize this approach to institutional planning, individuals require expertise in information systems, and computer and research skills. This approach to planning has the advantage of "greater emphasis on precision and analysis, on the preparation of more quantifiable and rational justifications for plans, and on conveying an image of sophisticated planning and greater accountability" (Peterson, 1980, p. 135).

Philosophical Synthesis Model

As with the technocratic/empirical approach to planning, philosophical synthesis is not a well developed process model of planning. It asks fundamental questions related to the nature of society (both present and future), about opinions and values, and about belief systems. The prime focus of this approach is the development of a mission for the institution based on the beliefs and values of the constituents. The planner must be able to encourage and facilitate philosophical debate and then rationalize the debate into consensus. Although Peterson (1980, p. 136) stated that "advantages of this approach are unclear," it can foster wide-ranging involvement in the basic questions that guide the institution and its mission.

Political Advocacy Model

According to Peterson (1980), this approach to planning de-emphasises mission and goals and concentrates on the policy issues of the institutional units. The basic assumption here is that the institution is driven by special interest groups and that master plans are often a compromise set of policy positions of these groups. Within the political advocacy model, planning is achieved through bargaining, negotiation, and coalition formation. This approach to planning involves those who have political strengths and biases and can become a force during times of retrenchment. An understanding of political advocacy and its components is useful in rational models of planning.

Coordinated Anarchy Model

Peterson (1980) presented a final model related to the perceptions of administrators about the institutional planning units, termed the coordinated anarchy model. He indicated that

> this model begins with the view that the basis for organizing a college or university is and should be productive but highly autonomous units. The underlying assumption is that professionals in these autonomous units are best able to foster progress in their area, that spontaneity should be encouraged, and that constraints should be limited. In such a setting, planning is only a loosely coordinated process. (p. 138)

The planning orientation in this model may be either internal or external, and it attempts to accommodate diverse goals.

Peterson (1980) proposed that most institutions use a combination of these models, dependent upon the perceptions of the senior administrators. He did suggest, however, that the first model (formal-rational) is the model of choice in postsecondary education today.

The Adaptive and Interpretive Models

As a conceptual framework for analyzing the recovery strategies of the fourteen postsecondary institutions, Chaffee (1984) developed and applied the adaptive model and the interpretive model. Both models recognize the importance of changes in the environment and the potential impact on the organization that can result. The difference lies in the response strategies.

Chaffee (1984) stated that the adaptive model sees the organization as an entity with its own goals

> and involves attuning the organization to changes in market demands and reorienting the organization as needed in order to maintain or increase the flow of resources from the market to the organization. On the basis of this model, colleges and universities have been advised to conduct market research, monitor trends in their environment, increase their flexibility, and update their program offerings. (p. 213)

The interpretive model, on the other hand, is based on the premise that the organization consists of participants who are associated in order to achieve their own goals. The organization is the forum for this to occur. Therefore, "successful strategic management involves skilful use of all forms of communication and of the symbols used to portray the collective reality of the participants . . . the management of meaning" (p. 213). The results of the study in which these models were used showed that those colleges and universities that used a combination of adaptive and interpretive strategies proved to be more resilient than those that followed a purely adaptive strategy. For example, the more successful organizations used strategies which focused on improving the perception of the institution both externally and internally, while the less resilient ones concentrated on activities such as changing program offerings.

Organizational adaptation to environmental pressures was viewed in a similar manner by Cameron (1984). He suggested that the conceptual approaches to adaptation could be viewed as forming a continuum whereby at one extreme are administrators who believe that they have no power to adapt, while at the other end are those who perceive that there are effective adaptation strategies available. At the latter end of the continuum, Cameron placed the "symbolic approach" which by definition is the same as Chaffee's interpretive model. Therefore, both authors suggested that the most promise in terms of strategic planning and management was to be found in those strategies that involved the manipulation of meaning. Additional support for this contention is provided by Hall (1989) when he related how one college used various interpretive strategies in reaction to environmental pressures.

Comprehensive-Predictive and Incremental-Remedial Paradigms

Schmidtlein (1974) proposed that planning could be conceived as falling on a continuum between two extreme paradigms which he termed the Comprehensive-Predictive (C/P) paradigm and the Incremental-Remedial (I/R) paradigm. Larson (1987) tested these two models. The two paradigms were summarized by Larson (1987) in this way:

> Comprehensive-Remedial planning is characterized by attention given to technical and analytical systems rather than to political or market processes. It is an approach in which means and ends are explicitly defined, are logically consistent and cover a broad range of activities. This approach to planning usually entails formal analysis of costs and benefits and prescribes detailed goals and objectives that are often forecast into a long-range future.
>
> Incremental-Remedial planning is characterized by attention given to processes rather than to systems. It is an approach that usually focuses attention upon margins at the status quo, restricts consideration of the variety of alternatives and outcomes to a few, makes successive limited comparisons of means to ends, continually amends choices as trials require remediation, and fragments or pluralizes the decision process. (pp. 11-12)

It was proposed by Schmidtlein (1974) that the application of either the C/P or I/R approach to planning was "determined by trade-offs between conflicting values that are embodied in each of the decision paradigms" (p. 5). Specifically, the C/P paradigm is best applied in times of high levels of uncertainty due to its prescriptive nature whereas the I/R paradigm "which operates through processes of mutual accommodation, results in gradual changes and thus favors stability" (p. 5).

Schmidtlein (1974) also suggested that the selection of either the Comprehensive/Prescriptive paradigm or the Incremental/Remedial paradigm would be dependent upon "trade-offs between comprehensiveness (to discover externalities and system-wide effects) and disjointed actions (to permit prompt response to problems)" (p. 9). He suggested that there are a number of areas of trade-off in the "decision-making environment" as a result of constraints imposed by time, knowledge, availability and distribution of resources, the extent to which there is consensus in the policy field, and conflicting functional demands. He proposed that "Decision-makers, therefore, are faced with the dilemma of finding the proper mix of these two models of decision making in any given set of circumstances" (p. 9).

The purpose of this section has been to review a number of planning models, approaches, and paradigms that have some applicability to postsecondary education. As indicated, no one model predominates but planning tends to rely on combinations of approaches. It would appear, though, that the most planning processes have as their core some form of the formal/rational model with elements of others attached. The current interest in, and application of, strategic planning in postsecondary education would be a case in point. The following section provides an overview and definitional base for this planning process.

An Overview of Strategic Planning

Much has been written with respect to the application of strategic planning to postsecondary educational institutions. The writing most frequently cited is that of Keller (1983). As Cope (1987) wrote:

> Strategic planning visibly started with George Keller's *Academic Strategy* in 1983, one of the largest-selling books ever written on the management of academy. Its subsequent widespread use suggests that, where properly conceived and carried out, the application of the strategic concept leads to improved institutional viability. (p. 1)

In this book, Keller laid the ground work for the application of this planning innovation to these kinds of organizations. He began this by indicating what, in his view, strategic planning *was not*. In this regard, Keller suggested that strategic planning was not:

1. the production of a blueprint,
2. a set of platitudes,
3. the personal vision of the president or board of trustees,
4. a collection of departmental plans, complied and edited,
5. done by planners,
6. a substitution of numbers for important intangibles,
7. a form of surrender to market conditions and trends,
8. something done at an annual retreat,
9. a way of eliminating risks, nor
10. an attempt to read tea leaves and outwit the future. (pp. 140-142)

The concept of strategic planning has been borrowed from the military and adapted by business. According to Cope (1981), the word "strategy" ~~comes~~ from a Greek noun and verb. The noun, *strategos*, "a general," which in turn has as its roots, "army" and "lead" and the Greek verb *stratego* which means "to plan." From these military orientations, the concept was in turn applied to business and then to non-profit organizations. When applied to the profit-oriented sector of the economy, the focus became not so much *efficiency*, doing things well, but on *effectiveness*, doing the right things. According to Cope (1987),

> Strategic planning is an open systems approach to steering an enterprise over time through uncertain environmental waters. It is a proactive problem-solving behavior directed externally at conditions in the environment and a means to find a favorable competitive position in the continual competition for resources. Its primary purpose is to achieve success with mission while linking the institution's future to anticipated changes in the environment in such a way that the acquisition of resources (money, personnel, staff, students, good will) is faster than the depletion of resources. (p. 3)

The strategic planning process, then, is one of trying to find the best fit between the environment and the institution in a proactive manner. There tends to be some confusion as to the differences between strategic planning and other forms of planning. A comparison of these two approaches, based on Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987), is shown in Table 2.2. It can be observed from this table that while other forms of planning tend to focus on the organization as a static entity, strategic planning approaches utilize a organismic metaphor wherein its relationship with the environment is key. According to Keller (1983), "There are six features that distinguish strategic planning from such predecessors as systems analysis, incrementalism, management science, long-range planning, and doing what you have always done.

> 1. Academic strategic decision making means that a college, school, or university and its leaders are active rather than passive about their position in history;

Table 2.2.

Differentiating Strategic Planning From Other Forms of Planning

Strategic Planning	Other Planning
Emphasis on the environment	Emphasis on the enterprise
Vision-directed	Follows a blueprint
Inductive and integrated	Deductive and analytical
Proactive	Reactive
Emphasis on doing the right thing	Emphasis on doing things right
Art	Science

Source : Meredith, M., Cope, R., & Lenning, O. (1987). *Differentiating bona fide strategic planning from other planning.* (ERIC Document Research Service No. ED 287 329)

2. Strategic planning looks outward and is focused on keeping the institution in step with the changing environment;
3. Academic strategy making is competitive, recognizing that higher education is subject to economic market conditions and to increasingly strong competition;
4. Strategic planning concentrates on decisions, not on documented plans, analysis, forecasts, and goals;
5. Strategy making is a blend of rational and economic analysis, political manoeuvring, and psychological interplay. It is therefore participatory and highly tolerant of controversy;
6. Strategic planning concentrates on the fate of the institution above everything else." (pp. 143-152)

Cope (1987) furthered the development of strategic planning. He suggested that strategic planning could be thought of as a "compass" rather than a "map" to the extent that the compass is useful in direction-finding while a map provides detailed directions for arrival at some pre-determined destination. The suggestion is that postsecondary educational institutions have historically relied on the map rather than on the compass and that they often have an inaccurate and outdated map which they cannot read.

Ringle and Savickas (1983) suggested that attention should be given to the temporal perspective of planning. There should be a balance between past, present, and future orientations. According to them, past-oriented institutions tend to be highly structured, wherein experimentation and innovation are thwarted. Present-oriented institutions, on the other hand, appear to always be in crisis. "Faculty morale suffers from anxiety, feelings of powerlessness, and a 'skidding' feeling. The administration is viewed as visionless and the institution as rudderless" (p. 652). At the other extreme, future-oriented administrators are so preoccupied with the future that they can miss opportunities of today and the institution can seem out of control. A balance of these three temporal orientations is urged. Strategic planning, if conducted in accordance with suggested procedures, should address these concerns. Although it does propose an external/future orientation, strategic planning processes involve a careful examination of mission, values, and internal strengths and weaknesses. These analyses should provide appropriate temporal perspectives.

Perspectives on the Strategic Planning Process

The strength of strategic planning is that it provides a procedure for responding to changes in the external environment. The process can also provide for a linkage between effectiveness and efficiency, and as a result can deal with both internal and external factors. A number of authors have provided suggestions with respect to the elements that should be present in the strategic planning process as it relates to postsecondary educational institutions. These authors are chosen due to their being well recognized and respected for their views and research on strategic planning as applied to postsecondary education. Selected articles written by these individuals are cited here in chronological order. Key elements from these were synthesized into a "typical" (normative) strategic planning process that was incorporated into the conceptual framework for this study.

Peterson (1980)

Peterson suggested that strategic (master) planning should include four broad elements. These were an environmental assessment, an institutional assessment, a values assessment, and a master plan creation. Peterson also stated that the link between strategic planning and resource allocation should be priority setting.

Cope (1981)

In this article, Cope suggested that there were five elements associated with strategic planning. These were:

1. review the mission, role, and scope of the institution, college, department,
2. gather data on the internal operations, especially their strengths and weaknesses,
3. gather data on the external environment, especially threats and opportunities,
4. match the mission with the strengths in ways that capitalize on the opportunities to develop alternative formulations of strategic policy, and
5. choose from among the alternatives those strategies that are consistent with the institute's values, economically justifiable, politically attainable, and consistent with serving important social values. (p. 49)

Keller (1983)

Keller suggested that there are six elements that should be part of the strategic analysis of the organization. These elements were:

1. traditions, values, and aspirations,
2. academic and financial strengths and weaknesses,
3. the abilities and priorities of the leaders,
4. environmental trends: threats and opportunities,
5. market preferences, perceptions, and directions, and

6. competitive situation: threats and opportunities. (pp. 152-163)

It is interesting to note that this author, who is seen as one of the leaders/founders of strategic planning for postsecondary educational institutions, would suggest analysis be made of the leadership of the organization. This position appears to be unique. Most other writers tend to concentrate on the process of planning while Keller hinted that there may be other issues (leadership, for example) that require assessment.

Morrison, Renfro, and Boucher (1984)

The work of these authors focused primarily on "futures research" although they did recommend six steps/stages in the strategic planning process. These steps included environmental scanning, evaluation of issues, forecasting of trends and issues, goal setting in the context of the expected future, implementation of specific policies, and monitoring of the outcomes.

Cope (1987)

Building on his previous work, Cope proposed that strategic planning should be seen as a two-part process. One part of the process relates to macro-level issues wherein the organization attempts to determine its *direction*. The other part of the model is micro-based in the sense that the organization makes the appropriate *changes internally* in order to accommodate any changes in direction or emphasis determined at the macro-level.

Robertson-Smith (1987)

Each postsecondary educational institution in the public system with which

Robertson-Smith was associated was required to prepare a strategic plan as part of the budgetary process. According to third-party experts, the plan prepared by this author was "exemplary" due in part to its extensive faculty participation. Robertson-Smith incorporated four basic components into her model. The first phase was a two-pronged review of the mission. One aspect examined organizational activities in the context of the mission, while the other portion confirmed the contents of the mission itself. The second phase of the strategic planning process was a determination of the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. The author stressed the importance of linking the strengths of the institution with its mission. The third phase of the process involved an examination of the threats and opportunities in existence in the external environment. The final phase of the strategic planning process as suggested by Robertson-Smith was the allocation of resources based on the prioritizing of alternative strategies. The author stressed the importance of a participatory approach to a review of institutional values, an examination of alternative strategies, and the setting of priorities.

It can be observed from the foregoing that there is a distinct set of elements or steps with respect to strategic planning as it is being applied to postsecondary educational institutions. These elements form the basis of what is termed in this study a *normative model of strategic planning* (presented later in this chapter). In general terms, there are eight elements that appear to be consistently applied within the literature in this field. These are a clarification the mission statement, the articulation of a vision for the college, an assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses, an assessment of external opportunities and threats, the development of prioritized plans based on these assessments, the development of department-level plans according to this set of priorities, the allocation of resources to these plans, and the establishment of a mechanism for the evaluation of the outcomes of the planning process. It becomes apparent that a key element in the process is the link between the plans themselves and the allocation of resources required for the realization of those plans. To used Cope's (1987) terminology, a distinction should be made between finding direction for the institution (strategic planning) and making the required changes within the organization to facilitate achievement of the changes in direction (operational planning). According to Gates and Brown (1987), the key to this connection is prioritizing the plans that result from the strategic planning phase in order that they can be made operative through the budgetary cycle. The extent to which these suggestions have been followed and the overall effectiveness of the strategic planning approach to postsecondary education are addressed in the following section.

Evaluating the Extent and Effectiveness of Strategic Planning Approaches in Postsecondary Education

Strategic planning in the postsecondary educational arena has been formally applied for over a decade (Winstead and Ruff, 1986). During this period, a number of institutions have utilized the process. At the same time, a number of researchers have studied its effectiveness in terms of assisting these organization to respond to the increasing and changing demands they face. The following section provides an overview of some of the findings and conclusions that have resulted from this research.

The Extent of Strategic Planning in Postsecondary Institutions

A number of studies conducted in the United States have been aimed at determining the extent to which strategic planning is used in postsecondary institutions. One such study (Baldridge and Okimi, 1982) analyzed responses from over 700 U. S. college presidents along with the results of intensive interviews at eight campuses. Their research gives general findings which relate primarily to the benefits of strategic planning. In a similar U. S. study by Boxx and Johnson (1980), 77% of 220 respondent postsecondary institutions indicated that they engaged in strategic planning. Petrello (1986) found that 76% of the 100 U. S. colleges he studied engaged in the strategic planning process; however, only 43% of the colleges in the study had been using these techniques for five or more years.

More specific results are given in a United States study by Meredith (1985). In this study, he surveyed 196 postsecondary institutions and found that approximately 87% stated that they engaged in strategic planning. However, in a subsequent study by Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987) of those institutions that indicated that they were involved in strategic planning, only about one-third of them were conducting bona fide strategic planning according to strict definitions.

Hurst and Peterson (1991) also described a study that examined the extent of planning in postsecondary institutions in the United States. They reported on a 1987 study conducted by the National Center for Postsecondary Governance and Finance (NCPGF) that involved 3,333 college administrators at 256 higher education institutions. The study focused on the existence and influence of the Chief Planning Officer (CPO) at the institution. It was found that of those institutions that responded, 57% had such an individual. It was also determined that for those institutions that had a CPO, the planning processes tended to be more systematic, comprehensive and rational.

Larson (1987) also drafted a report based on the study conducted by the NCPGF. He found that similar proportions of respondent organizations had Chief Planning Officers and that study participants tended to favour planning that was systematic, long-range and comprehensive (the Comprehensive-Prescriptive paradigm), but that the perceived current approach tended to be incremental, short-range, laissez faire, and driven by market and political forces (Incremental-Remedial paradigm). These findings along with those of Hurst and Peterson (1991) would suggest that although the mechanics of the planning process are important, there are factors (such as who is involved in planning) which determine or influence the types of planning processes to be employed.

Another study which reinforced the importance of "non-process" factors in planning was presented by McDowell (1985). In this study, she reported the results of a planning process that was implemented in a Junior College in the

United States. The key to the success of the planning process at this college was the structuring of an ad hoc planning committee that had representation from all constituencies. This approach was preferred over using existing committees and structures to perform the planning activities.

A study by Freed (1987) reinforced the findings of that of McDowell (1987). Freed found that in a study of 133 liberal arts colleges in the United States, 81% reported that they were utilizing strategic planning processes although the author had some concerns with respect to their definition of strategic planning. Freed also determined that the majority of colleges utilized specific, ad hoc committees to fulfil the planning role.

An Approach to Evaluating Strategic Planning

A number of authors have critically examined the process and outcomes of strategic forms of planning as they relate to postsecondary educational institutions. Shirley (1987) developed a set of criteria that one could use to evaluate this approach to planning. These criteria related to the evaluation of the planning process, data utilized in these processes, and the kinds of decisions that result. These sets of criteria are briefly outlined here.

Criteria for evaluating the planning process. Shirley suggested five criteria for evaluating the planning processes in postsecondary educational institutions. These were:

1. Is there evidence of top management support for the planning effort?
2. Have appropriate constituents been meaningfully involved?
3. Does the process concentrate on substance rather than form?

4. Does the process provide for continuity?

5. Does the process culminate in decision making? (pp. 19-20)

Criteria for evaluating data used in planning. Shirley also suggested criteria that could be used to evaluate the kinds of data that are used as part of the institutional planning process. He listed these as:

1. Are the data relevant to the decisional issues facing the institution?

2. Has the appropriate quantity of data been employed in the decision-making process?

3. Are the data sources of high quality? (pp. 18-19)

Criteria for evaluating the decisional aspect of planning. According to Shirley, the outcome of planning should be the formulation of decisions. The quality of these decisions can be evaluated against these criteria:

1. Are the strategic directions of the institution clear and definable?

2. Do the decisions contained in the plan represent a coherent course of action for the institution?

3. Do the decisions take the proper cognizance of the trends outside (and inside) the institution, internal strengths and weaknesses, and key personal and organizational values?

4. Are there evidences that the decisions made as a result of planning are being implemented appropriately throughout the enterprise?

5. Are the decisions timely and reflective of the institutional life cycle? (pp. 16-18)

As a result of applying some of these criteria to the strategic planning processes observed in postsecondary environments, a number of strengths and weaknesses of this planning approach have been identified.

The Strengths and Benefits of Strategic Planning

As Baldridge and Okimi (1982) stated, "for once, the newest movement--strategic planning--does seem to have promise . . . it promises to overcome many of the difficulties and frustrations that most of us have experienced with long-term planning" (p. 6). Morrison and Cope (1985) echoed this sentiment when they said that "strategic planning is now recognized as an improved form of college and university planning . . . it places more emphasis on the environment, the openness of the boundaries, and the interplay with other organizations" (p.5). Morrell (1986) suggested that the objective of strategic planning is the survival of an organization: "Considering the shrinking pool of applicants, continually rising student fees . . . strategic plans must be developed to cope with the situation" (p.22). Kotler and Murphy (1981) discussed the rapid and dramatic changes occurring in the environment surrounding postsecondary institutions and concluded that strategic planning was required if they were to survive through troubled times. For these organizations, strategic planning caused the administrators to focus attention on both internal and external matters. It required a reorientation from "doing things right" to "doing the right things" (Baldridge and Okimi, 1982).

The major outcome of strategic planning is an action plan with a significant performance impact. This action plan ensures with a high degree of probability that the present and future resources at the disposal of the management would be allocated only to activities within the framework of the organizational mission and that the resources so allocated would yield acceptable results within a stated time frame.

Strategic planning helps an institution to focus systematically on change and improvement. It enables the planner to make the right decisions today to meet tomorrow's requirements and allows the destiny of the organization to be shaped in a rapidly changing world. Strategic planning further helps avoid crises, gives predictability and control, builds consensus, and helps to harness the future. According to Lang (1988), the autonomy which institutions value highly depends on planning. In the absence of strategic planning, institutions can drift at the expense of quality and public responsibility. Lang also indicated the ability of strategic planning to help an institution to take full advantage of opportunities and make maximum use of resources. According to him, an institution that does not plan tends to be administratively incoherent, organizationally slack, indecisive and arbitrary. Planning avoids problems being solved by trial and error. The participation in decision making that it allows avoids frustration, cynicism and confusion.

Cope (1985) valued strategic planning for the continuing capacity it allows the members of an institution to solve their own problems. According to Cope, strategic planning improves organizational effectiveness, enhances problem solving and interpersonal skills and increases understanding among and between work groups. The group participation and democratic processes it employs improves team management.

Hardy (1988) also identified a number of benefits of strategic planning.

Hardy suggested that this type of planning helps to answer critics, responds to demands for accountability, reveals new opportunities, allows for more efficient use of resources, provides better management, achieves excellence, and lays the foundation for performance evaluation. Its ability to demonstrate effectiveness helps to reassure supporters and to improve funding. Its ability to respond to market needs opens up new opportunities such as additional funding, more support from the business sector, or useful and highly valued inputs from the community.

According to Scott (1986), strategic planning promotes understanding of institutional goals. It also enables better communication not only among institutional personnel, but also among different units of the organization. The strategic planning process according to Gates and Brown (1987) enables an institution to develop and maintain a congruent relationship between its goals and resources and its external environment.

In a longitudinal study of planning in American postsecondary institutions, Meredith, Lenning, and Cope (1988) reported on the perceived benefits of strategic planning. According to their report:

> Respondents from institutions following more strategically oriented planning processes reported: (1) more satisfaction, (2) believed they were getting better results, and (3) the analysis of funds available . . . for education and general expenses increased more rapidly for those institutions engaged in bona fide strategic planning. Perhaps more important- when the increases in funding were corrected for inflation and based on expenditures per student and per faculty member--institutions not engaged in "correct" forms of strategic planning reported spending less per student and less per faculty member than in 1980-81. (p. 1)

In summary, there are a number of strengths and benefits that postsecondary administrators realize in relation to strategic planning processes. Primarily, these relate to its providing a flexible stance from which to view the changing world, and providing assistance in establishing a match between the strengths of the institution and the opportunities that are presented in that changing world. Despite its apparent applause, however, a number of criticisms and weaknesses have also been identified with respect to the application of strategic planning in the postsecondary environment. Some of these are reviewed in the following section.

Weaknesses and Causes of Failure

There is evidence that both the internal and external environments of postsecondary institutions are turbulent. It has also been pointed out that strategic planning has evolved from military/business planning processes. Therefore, the application of strategic planning processes to deal with non-profit educational institutions should be made with the knowledge of potential pitfalls. Some of these difficulties relate to internal institutional nomothetic and idiographic factors. Schmidtlein and Milton (1989) suggest a number of factors unique to academic settings that should be understood in order to perform effective strategic planning.

The focus of planning efforts. One must understand that central leadership is necessary in the planning effort in order to ensure that the overall perspective of the institution is considered. A clear understanding of the mission and mandate should be brought to the planning effort. Interdisciplinary jealousies should not bias this process. However, many of the initiatives for change come from the faculty level. They are the most knowledgeable regarding changes in their field. Therefore, central leadership must involve those individuals with the ideas and the most to gain or lose from the strategic planning process. There is also a place for real leadership, and possibly a new mission which can break the old balance of power--a balance between old and new.

The politics of planning. According to Schmidtlein and Milton (1989), "the diffusion of power on a campus does not lend itself to the imposition, without compromise and accommodation, of the views of any one party" (p. 13). Such are the realities of postsecondary institutions. As a result, the planner cannot use this activity to impose change on any one segment (although some funding agencies impose their requirement for planning on the institution). Further, the avoidance of potential conflict over the planning activity is not the solution (Richardson and Gardner, 1985). To the extent possible, this venture should be democratized.

The frequency of planning exercises. With the exception of setting budget priorities, it is suggested that major planning activities should not be annual. Instead, the strategic planning efforts should occur at approximately five year intervals. The benefits to be derived compared to the associated costs is questioned otherwise. Schmidtlein and Milton (1989) stated that "while planning can help to inform and expand one's understanding of possible futures, it cannot provide a detailed blueprint for future actions, nor can it avoid the need for skilful improvisation and careful judgement" (p. 17).

Nomothetic and idiographic dimensions. Chaffee (1985) suggested a number of characteristics of postsecondary institutions that make the application of strategic planning somewhat more difficult than would be the case for profit-oriented firms. These are listed here:

> 1. Higher education organizations have multiple, often conflicting goals.
>   a. Many important higher education outcomes are intangible.
>   b. Leadership charisma tends to be important because there are fewer measures of effectiveness in eduction than in business.
>
> 2. Chief executives lack power.
>   a. Employees are more committed to their profession than to the organization.
>   b. Resource providers tend to intrude into organizational functioning.
>   c. Open debate, broad participation, and approval from representative bodies are expected.
>
> 3. Strategic options are constrained in higher education.
>   a. The influence of clients (students) in some higher education institutions is weak.
>   b. Higher education lacks opportunity to achieve economies of scale.
>   c. Geographic location is a significant determinant of success.
>   d. Functions tend to be integrated, not separable. (p. 136)

Oliver and Gabber (1983) outlined a number of mistakes common to strategic planning. Inadequate involvement of top and line management is one of these. To be effective, planning requires even and consistent executive commitment. With little or no input from managers it is difficult to enlist their commitment to the formulated plans. They also indicated that a strategic plan consisting solely of numbers as unsuitable, and that quality counted more in planning when compared to quantity. Lang (1988) also discussed the dangers associated with the application of quantitative approaches to planning by stating that "everything measurable as not relevant, and everything relevant as not measurable." According to him, heavy reliance on what was objectively measurable forced subjective and qualitative factors into the background, and misled the planners.

According to Hardy (1988), the human dimension of planning tends to be ignored when advanced analytical systems are considered as the key to effective planning. To be successful, an institution has to do more than adapt to a changing environment. It has to locate new market opportunities and diversify its services. A leader with ability to motivate and redirect followers is of value in planning. This leader should develop an organizational saga or a collective understanding of the achievements of the organization in order to provide purpose and motivation. This saga relates to the tradition and culture of the institution, which influences the success of planning. The problem with strategic planning, according to Hardy, is that it emphasizes one view of the world--the rational analytic view--which appeals to certainty and order. As a result, the more intangible side of management which may be crucial to effectiveness gets dismissed as unimportant. As Mintzberg (1987) proposed, what is lacking is the art of management, and not the science of planning. According to Hardy (1987), what is needed is a better understanding of how to nurture vision, innovation, leadership, motivation, commitment, and communication. In fact Hardy (1987) stated that

> we might expect administrators to avoid strategic turnaround if they think it will endanger the commitment and loyalty of their staffs and engender political conflict. The finding that universities have not made large-scale reallocations of resources might reflect *conscious* decisions to avoid the

debilitating effects of strategic turnaround. (p. 15)

Scott (1986) also suggested a number of potential areas of weakness with respect to strategic planning. He cautioned that the lack of broad participation and involvement of all concerned was central to the failure of the planning process in many cases. The final planning document according to him had to reflect the thinking of people affected by the plan, those mandating that the plan be developed, and those whose responsibility it was to design the process and produce the planning document. Success in planning is also based on collaboration, exchanging ideas about future directions, and sharing responsibility for writing, reviewing, disseminating and carrying out decisions central to the plan. Channelling ideas of all concerned to the areas that are most relevant enhances representativeness and creates a larger circle of ownership. This also extends administrative vision about the institution's future, and adds greater depth to the plan. Further, this provides opportunity to air objections, make suggestions, and propose revisions. Having the sensitivity to listen to these views increases the usefulness and the relevance of the final product.

In a recent article, Jones (1990) articulated a clear, concise summary of the factors associated with the failure of strategic planning efforts in postsecondary educational institutions. These were:

1. The president does not assume the role of chief planner for the institution,

2. Those directly involved in the planning process do not receive the training required for the successful implementation of the plans,

3. The trustees and other important stakeholders have not placed their stamp of approval on the process,

4. The timetable established for achieving results is too long, and

5. The faculty, staff, and others who will be affected by the planning process are not provided with a comprehensive overview that allows them to understand what the institution is trying to achieve. (pp. 52-54)

From this list, one observes that the primary reasons for the failure of strategic planning activities relate to over-arching, internal features of the institution as opposed to the mechanics of the process itself.

The foregoing potential causes of failure of the strategic planning process in postsecondary educational institutions appear to relate for the most part to the concept of *organizational culture*. Chaffee and Tierney (1988) referred to the importance of this concept when they said that:

> Institutions are certainly influenced by powerful external factors, such as demographic, economic, and political conditions, yet they are also shaped by strong forces that emanate from within. . . . The most fundamental construct of an organization, as of society as a whole, is its culture. An organization's culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. (p. 7)

Therefore, any success at implementing the strategic planning process in postsecondary educational institutions can only be realized if the organizational culture is understood and actively considered.

Potential impediments to the application of strategic planning in postsecondary educational institutions in Canada were suggested by Sibley (1986). He noted some differences between the Canadian system of postsecondary education and that of the United States where the majority of research has been conducted with respect to the use of strategic planning in educational organizations. The primary contrasting feature noted by Sibley (1986) was that:

> Our universities . . . are now firmly and irrevocably embraced in a system supported by public funding, and are therefore subject to all the pressures which such a system imposes. The kind of competition in which private institutions must engage, as in the United States, has vanished from the Canadian scene. And our political realities are such that they are all going to be kept in business. They may languish but they will survive. (p. 86)

The implication of this for the individual institution with respect to planning is that the important role of government must be understood, and that this element of the strategic planning model will have particular significance for Canadian institutions. As indicated earlier, the timing and amount of financial allocations by public agencies to postsecondary institutions is a potential cause for planning difficulties. Recent efforts in Australia at rationalizing the system of colleges and universities must be noted.

To this point, this section has provided an overview of the extent of the application of strategic planning in postsecondary environments, as well as examined some potential benefits to be derived and reasons for failure in its application. The question remains - what does all of this tell us? This issue is addressed next.

Conclusions From the Evaluation of Strategic Planning

There are two main themes that flow from the foregoing examination. First, it was found that a number of planning exercises did not meet their intended end because the general directions determined in the process did not become operational and translated into resource commitments. One can conclude from this that the strategic planning process should be viewed as two-phased: a strategic phase and an operational phase (Cope, 1987; Shirley, 1988). The outcome of the strategic phase would be a set of prioritized plans for the institution, while the results of the operational phase would be specific, department-level plans complete with budget allocations and a mechanism for plan evaluation and follow-up.

The other major theme discovered from the evaluation of strategic planning in postsecondary education is that the success or failure of planning processes in to a large extent depends on factors not so much related to the mechanics of the process, but to those of the institutional (decision-making) environment in which the planning is being conducted (Schmidtlein, 1974). These could be termed "contextual" elements and include factors such as the attitude of the senior administrators with respect to planning per se, and to the political and participative nature of the process. This concept is presented in the next section.

The Context of Planning

As indicated above, studies related to the factors associated with the successes and failures of strategic planning in postsecondary education have shown the institutional environment surrounding the planning process to be a contributing factor (Cope, 1985; McDowell, 1985; Carson, 1987; Freed, 1987; Hurst and Peterson, 1991). The context of planning could be viewed as the backdrop against which planning is conducted. It overshadows the process. Figure 2.1 illustrates this concept. This figure shows the "four P's" associated with

Internal Factors

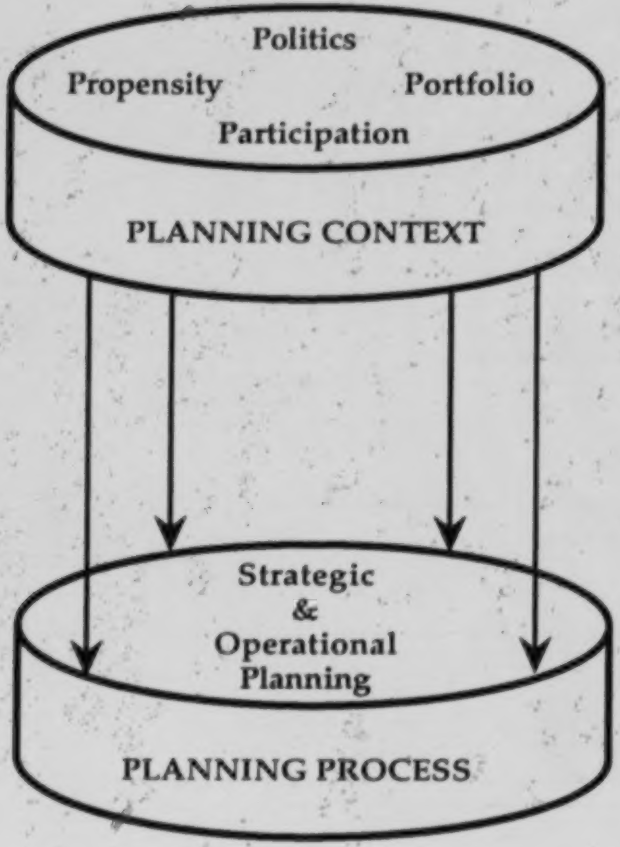
Politics
Propensity
Portfolio
Participation
PLANNING CONTEXT
Strategic & Operational Planning
PLANNING PROCESS

Figure 2.1. *The influence of the planning context on the planning process*

the context of planning- Propensity, Politics, Participation, and Portfolio. There could be other elements, but these four are indicative of the kinds of factors which can overshadow or influence the planning process. These are described here.

Propensity for Planning

This element relates to the tendency or willingness of the senior administrators to engage in planning exercises that are either long term or short term in nature. Some may have a propensity to engage in only the annual budgeting process and see this as planning. Other administrators support planning processes that relate to both the long- and short-term. In either case, the propensity to plan is a key determinant in the type and success of any planning effort.

Politics of Planning

The political nature of planning in colleges plays an important role in the real value or purposes of planning. For some, it is sufficient that planning be seen to be done, that the appearance of planning activities is more important than the process or outcomes of the process. In addition, the politics of planning as it relates to the contextual dimensions of planning involves power struggles over territory and resources, so that the planning process and outcomes are tainted by the strengths of one person or group over others.

Participation in Planning

One of the features of strategic planning, in its pure form, is that it relies on the input and participation of a large number of constituents. The extent to which this occurs in an institutional setting is dependent upon two factors. One is the amount of encouragement for participation in all facets of planning and decision making, while the other factor is the extent to which those affected by the plans do in fact make use of whatever opportunities for participation are afforded them. For some people, past experiences with the failure of planning activities taint their desire to participate again.

Portfolio of Planning

This contextual element refers to the planning structure utilized in the institution. Who does the planning? In some instances, the planning that occurs in colleges and universities is conducted by utilizing existing committees. That is, existing administrative committees take on long-term planning as an additional task to be performed. In other cases, specific ad hoc planning committees are mandated to conduct the planning process as a unique task. The approach taken in this regard tends to indicate the priority that planning receives in the institutional environment.

The Process of Planning: A Normative Model

As indicated above, one of the conclusions to be drawn from the successes and failures of strategic planning exercises was that planning should be seen as a two-phased process (Cope, 1987). One phase was strategic in nature while the other was operational. Together, they comprise the normative model of strategic planning as illustrated in Figure 2.2. While it is recognized that the operational phase would be characterized by a number of iterative cycles, the intent of the

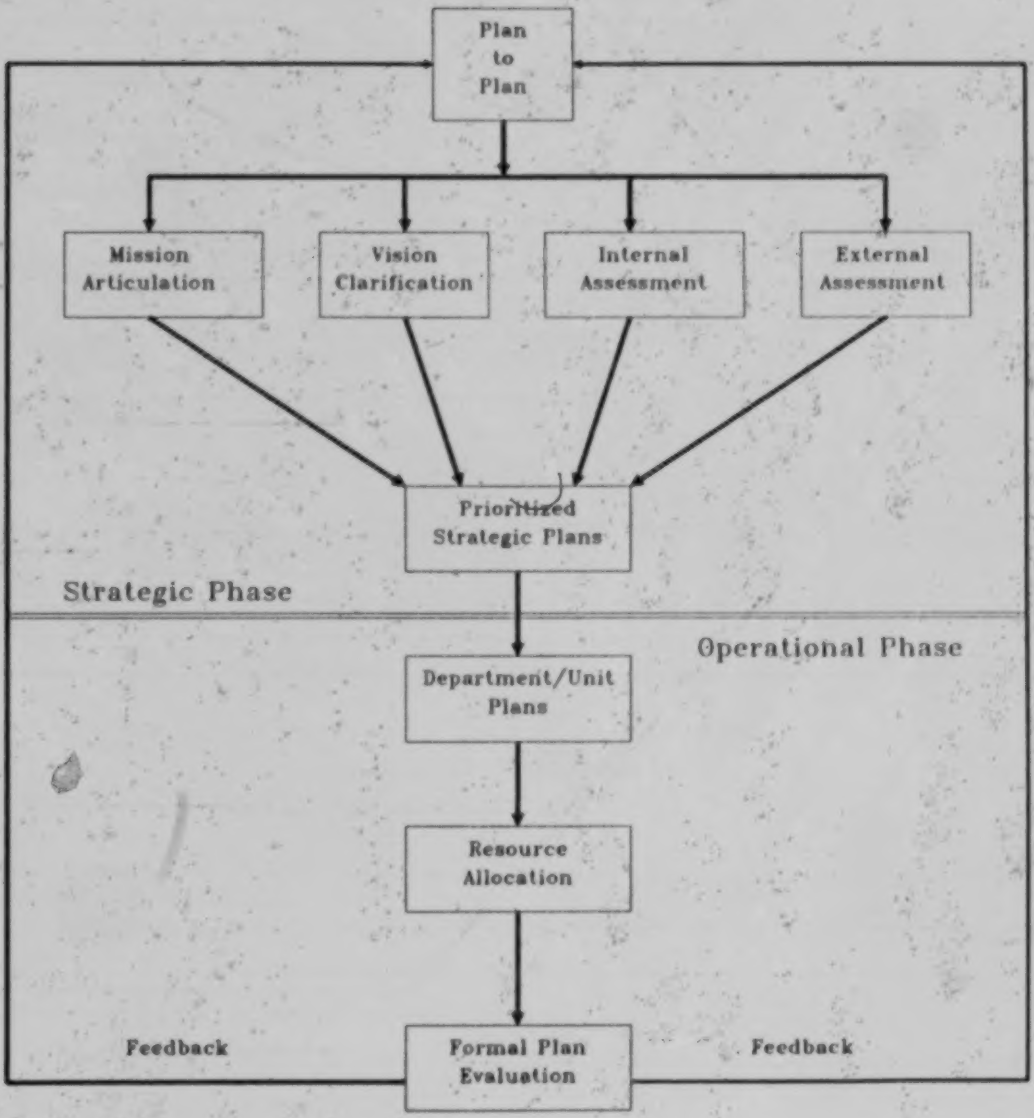
Plan to Plan
Mission Articulation
Vision Clarification
Internal Assessment
External Assessment
Prioritized Strategic Plans
Strategic Phase
Operational Phase
Department/Unit Plans
Resource Allocation
Formal Plan Evaluation
Feedback
Feedback

Figure 2.2. *A normative model of strategic planning*

normative model is to present institutional planning as dichotomous, with a strategic phase and an operational phase. This normative model formed the basis for the research questions for this study and is described in this section.

The Strategic Phase

The outcome of the strategic phase of planning is a set of prioritized, college-wide plans. The elements that comprise this phase are:

1. a review and clarification of the college's mission statement,
2. the articulation of the vision for the college,
3. an assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses,
4. an assessment of the external opportunities and threats, and
5. the prioritizing of alternative strategic options.

Each of these elements is detailed below.

Strategic element 1: A review and clarification of the college's mission statement. In conjunction with the college's mandate, the mission statement provides the organization's social justification for existence. This ensures that the organization is seen as a means rather than as an end in itself. Further, the expression of the mission statement in social terms can be a source of inspiration for faculty and staff. An important element of the mission statement is a complete stakeholder analysis. A stakeholder is defined by Bryson (1989) as "any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources, or output, or is affected by that output" (p. 52). The key to the success of the organization is the satisfaction of the major stakeholders.

Strategic element 2: The articulation of the vision for the college. Many organizations "dream" about what they will look like in the future. Writers on organizations who have documented "excellent" companies indicate that they have a vision of what they would like to become. This provides a goal for which to strive. Ultimately it is the leader who must develop the vision and then inspire others to share it. This element of the strategic phase of planning ensures that there is in fact a vision and that every effort is made to articulate it so that it may be shared by all constituents.

Strategic element 3: An assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Here, the organization identifies the strengths and weaknesses of its resources, processes, and outputs. Some of these may be difficult to measure, but attempts should be made at least to provide some qualitative estimates. For example, there are structural factors unique to postsecondary institutions in general and to individual colleges in particular that will influence the extent to which they can and should respond to external pressures and opportunities. Internal politics and methods of allocating resources are important factors which one would attempt to evaluate. This step is significant since the overall purpose of the strategic planning process is to link the internal strengths of the organization with opportunities that are present in the external environment.

Strategic element 4: An assessment of the external opportunities and threats. Opportunities and threats can be uncovered by monitoring a number of political, economic, social, and technological forces and trends. The acronym for these forces or trends (PEST) is quite descriptive given their potential impact (Jonsen, 1986). For purposes of this study, this term was used interchangeably with environmental scanning.

Boucher (cited in Morrison and Held, 1988) suggested that the techniques associated with environmental scanning in the corporate world were 15 years ahead of those in the public sector. Glover and Holmes (1983) wrote that:

> . . . the role of environmental assessment in strategic planning is to identify factors relevant to the mission of the institution; to assess favorable or unfavorable impacts of events, conditions, and trends on priorities; to develop scenarios; and to devise realistic strategies for viable futures for the institution. (p. 7)

Jonsen (1986) provided further clarification regarding environmental scanning. As mentioned earlier, he did this by suggesting that the external environment surrounding the postsecondary institution is comprised of the demographic environment, the economic environment, the political environment, the organizational environment, the technical environment, and the social environment. He suggested that environment scanning is an important strategic planning activity and that failure to do so can have serious deleterious affects: "Declining institutions appear to reveal an excessive concern for internal (administrative) efficiency, rather than for understanding and coping with the environment" (p. 7).

According to Morrison and Held (1988), environmental scanning can provide insight into trends, events, and emerging important issues. They suggested that a first step at the institutional level might be that of appointing one individual to gather together information from various internal and external sources and produce a newsletter which would circulate to all concerned individuals. Kotler and Murphy (1981), moreover, suggested that the process start with the senior officials, such as the president, in order to obtain their perspective on the kinds of information that would have relevance to the planning process. Jonsen (1986, p. 16) supported this contention when he stated:

> . . . even if an institution has access to information about all aspects of the environment, it does not necessarily follow that it has an adequate mechanism for an integrated understanding of the environment as a whole. What is needed then, is . . . sufficient high-level priority given to this activity to ensure its translation into decisions and then implementation.

In a sense, this could be seen as part of the senior manager's role as a boundary spanner.

A unique approach to environmental scanning was given by Youngren (1987). He reported one college's efforts to involve community leaders in this process. In this approach, Youngren coordinated the half-day forum of 252 local leaders who were invited to the college. As a result of input from these individuals, a list of 281 socioeconomic events, trends, and developments were identified. These were subsequently grouped into nine key trends that were relevant to the college's future. Preferred future scenarios were then developed. It is interesting to note that "the most important spin-off from the forum, however, was the energy which was triggered in the college staff to complete the final phase of the college's strategic planning process" (p. 10). The process of environmental scanning for postsecondary educational institutions has recently been formalized by Morrison and Mecca (1988) in their technique known as ED QUEST. This is a "recipe" which can be utilized any by college to determine those elements in the external environment that are likely to change and at the same time to estimate the impact of that change.

Strategic element 5: The prioritizing of alternative strategic options. The first four steps lead to the identification of the key issues facing the organization in terms of mandate, mission, service levels, clients, and management. Strategic planning is really the identification of the best "fit" between the organization and its internal and external environments. In this step, the iterative nature of strategic planning becomes apparent. For example, issues that were discussed in earlier steps may reappear in this one. The mission of the college may need to be reexamined in light of other issues that are summarized in this step (the internal strengths, for example). Strategic element 5 is one of potential conflict. This step involves the listing of alternative strategies, listing the barriers associated with each strategy, enumerating various proposals for overcoming the barriers, and identify action plans for both the long-term and short-term that would be necessary to realize successful completion of the plans.

The Operational Phase

The purpose of the operational phase of planning is to ensure that the plans and priorities identified in the strategic phase come to fruition (see Figure 2.2). The key elements of the operational phase of planning are:

1. the development of department-level plans,

2. the allocation of resources to these department-level plans, and
3. the development and implementation of a formal review and evaluation mechanism.

Each of the three elements is briefly described here.

Operational element 1: The development of department-level plans. This element of operational planning involves taking the strategic priorities that were identified in the previous phase and preparing responses at the department or service unit level. This level would be the lowest cost center identified. This element of planning would necessitate articulation between this level and the one(s) above it.

Operational element 2: The allocation of resources to the department-level plans. The allocation of resources to plans is an indication to participants in the planning process that the plans and the process have been taken seriously. Failure at this stage has important implications for subsequent efforts at planning. As the title of this element suggests, the plans developed are incorporated into the budget cycle of the college.

Operational element 3: The development and implementation of a formal review and evaluation mechanism. This is essentially the feedback loop. The dynamic nature of planning is illustrated by this element. The monitoring of plans and their outcomes allows for changes to be made in order to keep the process on track. It is important that this review mechanism be formalized as part of the overall planning scheme, and it be understood by all participants.

Summary

There is a significant body of literature that has been written regarding the development of planning in postsecondary education in general and strategic planning in particular. Over the last few decades, planning processes have evolved through a number of phases, each one contributing unique characteristics to the processes. It would appear that the planning processes advocated today are based upon rationalistic paradigms and involve an assessment of external events in relation to an institution's capacity to respond to them.

There are both strengths and weaknesses associated with the application of strategic planning in postsecondary institutions. While the process focuses externally, takes a proactive stance, and encourages broad participation, flaws appear evident in the application of the model. For example, the collegial nature of educational institutions presents a challenge to a process that assumes a rationalistic basis for planning and decision making. The nature of the internal environment of the institution was seen to be an important ingredient in relation to the success of the application of strategic planning in these kinds of organizations. In order for strategic planning to be a viable approach to responding to the elements of change that face colleges, it was suggested in the literature that the context in which the process was conducted required support and participation at all levels in the organization, and that ultimately the plans that resulted from the process be supported by the allocation of the required resources.

A normative model of strategic planning was presented in this chapter. It was based upon the varying elements found in the literature and was seen to be comprised of two phases--one strategic and one operational. The strategic phase resulted in a set of prioritized alternatives for the college based upon an assessment of internal and external factors in relation to the mission and vision of the institution. The outcome of the operational phase was a linkage of the strategic plans to the budgeting cycle, and a mechanism for the evaluation of the outcomes of the overall planning process. This normative model of strategic planning and the specific elements of which it was comprised formed the basis of the research questions for this study.

Chapter 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

As indicated in Chapters 1 and 2, there are tensions and pressures that influence the activities of postsecondary institutions. The processes associated with strategic planning were seen to provide colleges in Alberta with proactive stances from which to conduct their planning. The focus of this research was the planning processes currently utilized by public colleges in the Province of Alberta. The purpose of the study was to examine these processes in order to understand them, and then to compare them with strategic planning ones. From a practical perspective, there was potential in this study for suggesting improvements to current planning practices. From an academic point of view, there was potential for enhancing the models of effective institutional planning and examining the alternative approaches to planning in publicly-funded postsecondary institutions. This chapter outlines the approach that was taken in order to achieve these ends.

Introduction

The methodological basis for this study was that of case analysis. For this study, the focus was the public college sector of the postsecondary educational system in Alberta. The system is comprised of both private and public components. An overview of the system's historical development is presented in Appendix A. The following section describes this system in order that this study might be placed in perspective.

The Postsecondary Educational System in Alberta

Since 1972, the coordination of the postsecondary educational system in Alberta has been the responsibility of the Alberta Department of Advanced Education. According to the mission statement of the Department (Annual Report, 1989), its major purpose is to "provide the leadership, service, and coordination necessary to ensure the efficient development and functioning of an effective system of advanced education responsive to the needs of all Albertans." An example of the coordinating effort is evidenced in the requirement of each of the institutions in the public system to prepare, by the end of 1990, a development plan covering the next five to ten years.

The postsecondary educational system in Alberta is comprised of both private and public components and is under the direction of the Alberta Department of Advanced Education. At various points in its history, this department has been combined with other educational/employment bodies (Appendix 1). This section provides an overview of the system's current characteristics.

Type of System

According to Clark's typology (Clark, 1983), the postsecondary educational system in Alberta could be classified as being primarily public with a number of distinct sectors. Although the system is comprised of both public and private institutions, the majority are public. In the academic year 1989/90, approximately 82,000 students were enrolled in full-time credit programs in Alberta's postsecondary educational system. Of this number of students, 79,800 (97%) were enrolled in public institutions.

The Public Component

The publicly administered segment of the system in 1990-91 consisted of four universities, the Banff Centre, eleven public colleges, two technical institutes, four Alberta Vocational Colleges, and six hospital-based schools of nursing. There were 85 further education councils, and four community consortia in the publicly administered portion of the postsecondary educational system in the province. Each of these is briefly described.

The University sector. The four universities in Alberta's postsecondary educational system are the Athabasca University, the University of Alberta, The University of Calgary, and The University of Lethbridge. The University of Alberta is the oldest, dating back to 1908. All the institutions in this sector could be considered comprehensive in their program offerings and reasonably traditional with the exception of Athabasca University which is an open university delivering its programs primarily through distance means. The Banff Centre for Continuing Education provides advanced non-degree program in management and fine arts. In 1988/89, approximately 45,500 students were enrolled in full-time programs in Alberta's universities.

Public Colleges. The colleges offer a broad mix of courses which range in complexity from academic upgrading to university transfer (Wood, 1991). Some of the colleges have a more specialized focus, such as the agricultural college at Olds and the Alberta College of Art in Calgary. In the academic year 1989/90, approximately 20,500 students were enrolled in full-time programs in the 11 public colleges in the province.

Technical Institutes. There are two institutes of technology in Alberta, located in Calgary and Edmonton. Until 1990, there was a third one located in Stony Plain. This institution was merged with the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology in Edmonton. The Southern Alberta Institute of Technology is located in Calgary. The programs offered at the technical institutes range from two-year diploma programs in a number of different technologies to ad hoc courses offered on a continuing education basis. The majority of formal apprenticeship training in the province occurs in these institutions. Approximately 12,100 full-time students were registered in the institutes of technology in 1989/90.

Provincially Administered Institutions (P.A.I.). There are four P.A.I.'s which are termed Alberta Vocational Colleges (A.V.C.). Students at these institutions are offered courses which relate to academic upgrading, skills training, and other programs that respond to local, regional, and provincial needs. These four A.V.C.'s are located in Calgary, Edmonton, Lac La Biche, and Lesser Slave Lake. In addition, the A.V.C. at Lesser Slave Lake administers programs that reach 19 other communities.

Hospital-Based Schools of Nursing. In Alberta, there are six hospital-based schools of nursing. In 1989/90, approximately 1,550 students enrolled in diploma programs in nursing and psychiatric nursing.

Community Consortia. Four Community Consortia operate in areas of the province that are distant from Alberta's postsecondary institutions. These consortia are associations of institutions working cooperatively and in close association with local citizens to provide postsecondary credit programs. The headquarters for these consortia are located in Hinton, Drayton Valley, Drumheller, and Crowsnest Pass.

Further Education Councils. Further Education Councils provide for the non-credit postsecondary needs of Albertans. In total there are 85 such councils, each consisting of private citizens and representatives of local service agencies, groups, and educational institutions that offer programs to adults. Each council is responsible for identifying local adult learning needs and taking steps to respond to those needs.

The Private Component

In the privately-administered segment, there are three accredited private colleges (which have degree-granting status), four affiliated private colleges, and over 100 private vocational schools. This segment was not the focus of this study.

Intermediary Bodies

Historically, there were two intermediary bodies. These were the Colleges Commission and the Universities Commission. In 1973, these were dissolved and their responsibilities were subsumed under the auspices of the newly-created Department of Advanced Education. A quasi-intermediary body is the University Coordinating Council, comprised of representatives from all the universities in the province. It makes recommendations to the Minister or Board of Governors of member institutions with respect to matters the relate to the activities of the general faculties councils. Another body with a quasi-intermediary role is the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer. The council, established in 1974, has a membership that consists of representatives of all public postsecondary institutions. Its prime function is to develop policies, guidelines, and procedures designed to facilitate transfer arrangements among institutions in the system. These guidelines are published annually in the *Alberta Transfer Guide*. There is a Council of Presidents of Colleges and Technical Institutes as well as an association of Vice-Presidents (Academic) which meet to discuss areas of mutual concern.

Institutional Governance

Each university is governed by a public board under the authority of the Universities Act. The Banff Centre operates under the Banff Centre Act. In the same manner, the public colleges receive authority from the Colleges Act and are governed by independent boards. As of 1982, the technical institutes were placed under the governance of public boards and must relate to the Technical Institutes Act.

The Study Focus (Public Colleges)

During the academic year 1989/90, approximately 20,500 students were enrolled in full-time programs in the 11 public colleges in the province. For the same year, the enrollments in full-time programs in these institutions ranged from 598 (Alberta College of Art) to 4302 (Mount Royal College), while the annual operating budgets varied between $6.1M and $38.1M. A brief statistical overview of the public college sector is presented in Table 3.1.

For purposes of this study, not all of the 11 public colleges were included. The utility of examining the institutional planning in the smallest colleges was doubtful in terms of answering the research questions of this study. As a result, any college for which the number of full-time students was less than 1000 was not included. This resulted in the elimination of the Alberta College of Art, Fairview College, and Olds College from the study (see Table 3.1). Further, it should be noted that the focus of the Alberta College of Art was narrow as compared to typical community colleges, as was the concentration of Olds College (primarily an agricultural emphasis). The number of remaining public colleges which formed the basis of the study was eight. Specifically, these were Grande Prairie Regional College, Grant MacEwan Community College, Keyano College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge Community College, Medicine Hat College, Mount Royal College, and Red Deer College. Relevant data regarding planning processes were collected from these institutions by analyzing documents, and by conducting structured interviews with key individuals. The data collected were analyzed using techniques which are described in this chapter and are considered to be descriptive of the planning processes of the total population (census) of public colleges in Alberta with enrollments greater than 1000.

Data Collection

The phrase that could be used to describe the data collection process for this

Table 3.1.

Alberta's Public College System: Selected Data

College	Year Founded	Budget[a]	Enrollment[b]	Staff[c]	Number of Participants[d]
Alberta College of Art	1926	$6.1M	598	111	
Fairview	1951	$12.3M	918	148	
Grande Prairie[e]	1966	$14.5M	1192	258	6
Grant MacEwan[e]	1971	$33.1M	3016	407	7
Keyano[e]	1975	$15.4M	1121	291	7
Lakeland[e]	1975	$15.7M	1109	273	5
Lethbridge[e]	1957	$22.6M	2700	397	12
Medicine Hat[e]	1965	$13.8M	1634	228	7
Mount Royal[e]	1966	$38.1M	4302	534	4
Olds	1913	$14.6M	844	225	
Red Deer[e]	1964	$24.3M	3958	404	9

[a] Total operating expense
[b] Students enrolled in full-time programs
[c] Full-time instructional, management, and support staff
[d] Number of administrators who participated in the study
[e] Colleges selected for study

Source of institutional data: Alberta Advanced Education (1990).

study is "multiple methods." Rather than relying on a single approach to the data collection task, the researcher utilized three. These methods consisted of a questionnaire, structured interviews, and content analysis of relevant planning documents. A brief description of each of these components follows. For each of the specific research questions, one or more items from the questionnaire and structured interview were designed to solicit relevant data (see Table F.1 in Appendix F).

The Questionnaire

The primary purpose of the survey questionnaire was to determine details with respect to institutional planning in the respondent's organization and to compare this process directly with the elements associated with strategic planning. The survey instrument was based on the work of Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987). Permission was granted to utilize the survey instrument of this study. Their research examined the institutional planning processes in over 100 U.S. colleges and universities in which strategic planning was reportedly being utilized, according to a previous study (Meredith, 1985). In their survey instrument, respondents were asked about current institutional planning practices as well as about their knowledge of the elements of true strategic planning. The authors prepared the "correct" answers to the questions regarding the elements of bona fide strategic planning and compared the respondents' answers with this key.

A modification of this approach was made for this study. The respondents were asked to provide information regarding their current college planning to measure." They identified four types of validity: content validity, construct validity, predictive validity, and concurrent validity. *Content validity* "refers to the degree to which the test actually measures or is specifically related to, the traits for which it is designed" (p. 155). Borg and Gall (1983) stated that content validity is "the degree to which the sample of test items represents the content that the test is designed to measure" (p. 276). *Construct validity*, according to Best and Khan (1986) is "the degree to which scores on a test can be accounted for by the constructs of a sound theory" (p. 156), while Travers (1978) stated that "When statements can be made about a measuring instrument that it fits into an organized body of knowledge, the instrument is said to have construct validity" (p. 142). According to Best and Khan (1986), *predictive validity* "refers to the usefulness of a test in predicting some future performance" (p. 156). Borg and Gall's (1983) view of predictive validity was "the degree to which the predictions made by a test are confirmed by the later behaviour of the subjects" (p. 277). The final form of validity identified by Best and Khan (1986) was *concurrent validity* and was defined as "the usefulness of a test in closely relating to other measures . . . . Tests are often validated by comparing their results with a test of known validity" (p. 156). Similarly, Borg and Gall wrote that "concurrent validity of a test is determined by relating the test scores of a group of subjects to a criterion measure administered at the same time or within a short interval of time" (p. 277).

One area of potential invalidity is the structured interview. According to Cohen and Manion (1980), bias can enter into the responses and cause widespread understating or overstating of reality. A suggested remedy to this potential problem is to "compare the interview measure with another measure that has already been shown to be valid. This kind of comparison is known as convergent validity" (Cohen and Manion, 1980, p. 252).

Reliability

Best and Khan (1986) described reliability as "the degree of consistency that the instrument or procedure demonstrates: Whatever it is measuring, it does so consistently" (p. 144). As Borg and Gall (1983) stated, reliability is "the level of internal consistency or stability of the measuring device over time" (p. 281). A number of methods of measuring and ensuring reliability have been enumerated by Travers (1978) and relate to the repeated measures approach. Specifically, these were parallel forms of the measuring instrument, reapplication of the same form, or various split-half methods. According to Crowl (1986),

> The split-half method is probability the most commonly used way of determining a test's reliability. The statistical calculations are exactly the same as those with the test-retest method and with parallel forms, but the decided advantage is that the test needs to be administered only once. (p. 99)

In accordance with the suggestions of Best and Khan (1986) and others regarding improving both reliability and validity of the interview, care was taken in the structure and selection of questions. In addition, the critical judgement of advisors was heeded. Specific steps were taken to ensure validity and reliability and these steps are outlined subsequently.

Research Trustworthiness

Care and attention with respect to validity and reliability has special applicability in relation to the human elements in naturalistic studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested a set of criteria against which these types of inquiries should be judged. They used the concept of trustworthiness and suggested that there were four components. These were credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings are a true reflection of the subject being studied, transferability suggests that the results can be applied in similar settings, dependability means that the data are stable and could be replicated within the same or similar contexts, and confirmability indicates that the results of the study reflect that which is being studied and not the perspectives of the researcher.

Validity and Reliability Procedures

In order to comply with the validity, reliability and trustworthiness requirements of quality research, a number of steps were taken in this study. They are described in this section.

The survey instrument. As indicated earlier, the basis for the questionnaire used in this study was that of a survey instrument developed by Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987). In that study, the researchers reviewed the institutional planning processes of over 100 postsecondary institutions in the United States. The basic format of the questionnaire and a number of the statements were applied to this study. The utilization of previously existing survey instruments helps alleviate some of the concerns with respect to the reliability issue.

Pilot-testing. Both the survey instrument and the interview guide used in the structured interviews were pilot-tested prior to their use in the study. Four senior administrators at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) completed the instrument and made comments that were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire. As well, four colleagues of the researcher who were college administrators participated in the pilot-testing process and made suggestions for improvement.

The interview guide was also pilot-tested. The four individuals from NAIT were subjects in this stage. They provided the researcher with suggestions for improvement. In addition, two professors of educational administration and one of marketing with interests in planning in postsecondary education reviewed the interview guide and made recommendations for change.

Interview validations. Each of the 60 structured interviews was tape recorded and subsequently transcribed. As soon as the transcription process was complete, a summary of each interview was prepared and sent to the respective interviewee for validation. The interviewee was asked to examine the summary, and indicate whether or not it was an accurate reflection of the interview. If there were changes required to the summary, the interviewee was asked to indicate what they should be. Each was asked to mail or fax the summary back to the researcher with their conclusions as to its accuracy. Fifty-five (92%) of the summaries were returned. Of these, 43 (78%) indicated that the summary was an accurate practices, but with respect to the topic of strategic planning, the researcher did not wish to appear to be "testing" the knowledge level of the respondents regarding this area. Therefore, the term strategic planning was replaced with the term "desirable college planning." This allowed for a comparison of the respondents' perception of desirable planning processes with those associated with strategic planning as proposed by Meredith, Cope, Lenning, and others. It also permitted one to examine the kinds of changes (if any) that college planners would like to implement, and to determine the extent to which current planning processes were in fact strategic planning ones. The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which twenty-two different statements reflected current and desirable approaches to planning at their college. A four-point scale was utilized with strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, agree = 3, and strongly agree = 4. Respondents were also provided a fifth response category, don't know/no opinion = 9. (See Appendix B for a copy of the survey instrument). In total, 57 senior college administrators participated in this study.

The adminstration of the survey instrument was an important element in this research. Each individual who had been identified as a participant was mailed a questionnaire to be completed prior to the personal interview. They were notified that the questionnaire would be taken away by the interviewer upon completion of the interview. As a result, the response rate was 100%. As well, this procedure had the effect of preparing the respondent for the subsequent personal interview in that they became aware of the substance and purposes of the interview prior to the event.

The Structured Interview

The basis for this portion of the collection process was an interview guide. It was designed to solicit verbal responses from interviewees that could be used to corroborate and enhance the findings of the survey instrument. Since each interviewee was asked the same set of questions, it was possible to compare and contrast responses of individuals from the same college as well as those of participants from different colleges. The questions related to matters of both the context and process of college planning. The interview guide that was used in the study is shown in Appendix C. Demographic information with respect to each participant was collected by utilizing the personal information sheet located in Appendix D.

Planning Documents

By the end of December 1990, each public postsecondary institution in the Province of Alberta was to have completed a "development plan" which in essence was that institution's strategic plan. These plans were to be submitted to the Alberta Department of Advanced Education. Each college in the study provided the researcher with a copy of this document. This document, along with others that each college prepared relative to planning was examined for information that could lead to an understanding of the institutional planning processes being utilized.

The Perspective of the Government

Since the focus of this study was *public* colleges, the role and influence of the provincial government (more specifically the Alberta Department of Advanced Education) in terms of the planning activities at the institutional level was important. The Department is instrumental in setting the colleges' mandates and is responsible for the overall coordination of the postsecondary system in Alberta. In addition, the Department determines the timing and content of the budgets for postsecondary institutions. Semi-structured personal interviews were held with three key individuals. As well, content analysis was performed on relevant Department documents in order to understand the perspective(s) of this organization.

Validity and Reliability

Assurance of the validity and reliability of the research instruments is a significant component of research. It is important that precautions be taken that will minimize the occurrence of errors in the data. These errors can result from flaws that are inherent in the instrument, or from the procedures used in administering the instrument. This section discusses the requirements of validity and reliability and describes the efforts that were taken in this study to guard against errors in the findings and conclusions.

Validity

According to Best and Khan (1986, p. 144), "Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed

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reflection of the interview, while the remaining twelve suggested changes to the summary. The majority of these suggested changes were minor.

Inter-rater reliability tests. The inter-rater reliability process was used to determine the extent to which the conclusions drawn from the structured interviews were reliable. Eight of the questions that were used in the structured interview were placed into an instrument (Appendix E) and two independent judges, one a recent recipient of a Doctorate in Educational Psychology and the other a Doctoral candidate in Educational Adminstration, were asked to determine the extent to which each question (formed as a statement) reflected current college planning practice as evidenced by the verbatim comments of the interviewee. Using a set of random numbers, the researcher selected 12 transcribed interviews (or 20% of the total number of interviews) as the basis for the procedure. The responses of the two judges were correlated with those of the researcher for these sets of responses. The correlation coefficients were .78 and .89 which suggest a high degree of convergence between the conclusions of the researcher and those of the two independent judges.

Split-half reliability. The responses to the items in the questionnaire were correlated as a measure of reliability. The odd-numbered items were correlated against the even numbered items. The Cronbach reliability coefficient was .86, suggesting that the respondents answered the survey instrument in a relatively consistent manner.

Credible subjects. Those who participated in the study were selected jointly by the president and contact person in each institution. In all cases, individuals in the upper echelon of each organization were the participants. These consisted of presidents, vice-presidents, deans, associate deans, directors, and registrars. These are the individuals in colleges who are most closely associated with college-wide planning activities and should be in a position to understand and describe the process. A synthesis the views of these individuals resulted in an understanding of the planning process for the college.

Multiple methods. A number of complementary methods were used in this study. These were questionnaires, structured interviews, and document content analysis. The conclusions from each approach converged to form a composite summary of the planning process and related views for each institution. This also formed part of the validation process in terms of convergent validity (Cohen and Manion, 1980).

The Integrity of the Data Gathering Process

The collection of the data that were required to answer the general and specific research questions involved "multiple methods" as indicated earlier. The data in Table F.1 (Appendix F) are a summary of the relationship between the research questions and the sources of data. The specific research questions were based on the normative model of strategic planning presented in Chapter 2. This section overviews the sources of data and the way in which they were used to reach conclusions regarding the elements of planning.

Responses to the Questionnaire and to the Interview

Six items from the questionnaire and the interview focused on the same areas, but results in some cases were different. Whether or not these differences were significant was important to determine. The results for this examination are presented in Table F.2. From this table it would appear that the response means for the questionnaires and the interviews were significantly different for the questions related to vision clarification, external assessments, and resource allocation.

The questionnaire utilized in this study was comprised of 22 items, some of which related to the context of planning, some to the strategic phase of planning, and others to the operational phase. Table F.3 outlines the relationship of these items to the planning elements, and shows those items which were used to form the basis of the planning profiles developed in this study.

The normative model of the strategic planning is comprised of two phases- the strategic phase and the operational phase. In turn, the strategic phase has five planning elements and the operational phase has three. As noted in Table F.3, some of these elements were associated with more than one item from the questionnaire. However, only one item was used to determine the profile of each planning element. The subsequent sections outline the interrelationships between items and elements in the planning processes of this study. Following is an overview of the strategic phase of planning in terms of the selection of the questionnaire items that were used for the planning elements in this phase.

Relationships Within the Strategic Phase

The strategic phase consisted of five elements. These were the role of the mission statement, the clarity of the vision for the college, the assessment of internal factors, the assessment of external factors, and the setting of priorities in terms of strategic options. Those elements with more than one questionnaire item as a source of data were the mission statement, internal assessments, and external assessments (Table F.3). In order to ascertain the interrelatedness of the items, correlational analyses were performed. Tables F.4, F.5, and F.6 present the results of this examination. In some cases, significant positive and negative correlations were observed. The selection of the appropriate item to represent each element (for the development of the planning profile) was determined by the closeness with which the item matched the descriptive statement for that element from the normative model.

A correlation analysis was also performed to determine the strength of the relationship between the five elements of the strategic phase of planning in this study. The results of this analysis are presented in Table F.7. According to this table, most of the correlations were significant.

Relationships Within the Operational Phase

Normative models of strategic planning propose three elements for the operational phase of planning. These are the development of department-level plans, the allocation of resources to these plans, and the establishment of a formal process for plan evaluation. In this study, one element--the development of department-level plans--was related to two questionnaire items. The strength of the relationship between these two items was tested with the use of a correlation analysis, and reported in Table F.8. There was a significant positive correlation between these two items and one was selected for this element of planning. A test of the strength of the relationship between the elements of the operational phase of planning suggested that the majority of the elements in this phase were also significantly, positively correlated with each other (Table F.9).

Relationships Between the Phases of Planning

The relationships between and among all the elements of the planning processes in this study were examined from the perspective of both current planning processes and desirable planning processes. Correlation analyses were performed to examine the strengths of the relationships between the elements of the strategic and operational phases of planning under current planning conditions (Table F.10), and between all elements under current planning conditions in relation to desirable planning conditions (Table F.11). A determination of the significance of the difference between the means for planning under current and desirable planning conditions was made (Table F.12). Results of these analyses suggest that, to a large extent, there was a significant difference between the means for the perceived levels of agreement regarding planning process under current as opposed to desirable planning conditions.

Data Collection Sources and Procedures

This section provides an overview of the sources of the data for this study as well as a description of the data collection procedures.

Data Sources

The focus of this study was the public college sector of the postsecondary educational system in Alberta. This sector consists of 11 separate institutions. Of this number, three were eliminated due to their relatively small size and lack of a comprehensive program mix. The eight that were included accounted for 73% of the institutions and 89% of the students enrolled in full-time programs in this sector. In order to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the names of the respondents were not linked to comments or other results in the study, and each college was randomly assigned an alphabetic designation for presentation purposes.

Another source of data for this study was the Alberta Department of Advanced Education. This organization is charged with the responsibility of being the linkage between the political agendas of government and the individual institutions in the system. To fulfil this role, the Department interprets policy and represents the postsecondary educational interests as they relate to those of other groups and departments in government. As a result, the Department is a major consideration in the planning activities of colleges. For purpose of this study, three senior officials of the Department were interviewed in order to determine their views on planning in colleges and the role that these institutions are to play.

The Data Collection Procedure

The president of each college in the study was sent a letter (Appendix G) by the chairman of the research committee soliciting participation in the study. In each case, the president was informed of the purposes of the study and encouraged to nominate a person with whom the researcher could work (a contact person) to provide for the logistical matters of the study. Based on this letter, all (eight) agreed to allow their college to be included in the study. Subsequent to the formal acceptance by the president to cooperate in the study, the contact person provided a list of names of individuals and arranged a schedule of interviews at mutually agreeable times.

As mentioned above, the data collection process consisted of three components. First, the survey instrument was mailed to the interviewee to be completed prior to the interview. The second component of the data gathering process was the tape recorded structured interview which took place in the office of the interviewee and third, participants were asked to provide the researcher with copies of recent planning documents that might reflect current planning processes.

Data Analysis

Since the data-gathering phase of the study had a number of different elements, the data analysis phase also required unique approaches suited to each type of data collected. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed by comparing means since the responses were placed on an interval scale. In terms of the data contained in the structured interviews, content analyses were performed. A coding structure was established in such a way that the responses

Table 3.3

Ages of Colleges in the Study

College	Year Founded	Age (Years)
Lethbridge Community College	1957	34
Red Deer College	1964	27
Medicine Hat College	1965	26
Grande Prairie Regional College	1966	25
Mount Royal College	1966	25
Grant MacEwan Community College	1971	20
Lakeland College	1975	16
Keyano College	1975	16

Source: The dates that colleges were founded were provided by Berghofer and Vladicka (1980).

College Size

One indicator of the size of a college are the FTE enrolments. Traditionally, there have been inconsistencies in the way in which these data were calculated particularly for those reporting students in part time studies (Michael, 1991). Recently though, the Department has been working on the development of a Common Information System (CIS) which will standardize the process of reporting the FTE count. The data reported in Table 3.4 are for the 1988/89 academic year and represent only those students enrolled in full-time programs. Data in this table indicate a range of 3193 students between the largest and the smallest colleges in this study.

In summary, the eight colleges included in this study were located in both rural and urban regions of the Province, had all been in operation for over 15 years, and had student enrolments of between 1109 and 4302 in full time programs in the 1988/89 academic year. They represent a census of public colleges in Alberta with over 1000 students enrolled in full-time programs. The following section is a summary of demographic characteristics of the individuals who participated in this study.

Profile of Respondents

In total, 60 individuals participated in the study. Of this number, 57 were associated with the eight colleges while three held senior positions in the Alberta Department of Advanced Education and were involved in only the structured interview phase of the study. All 57 individuals from the colleges completed the

Table 3.4

College Size as Indicated by the Number of Students in Full-Time Programs

College	Students in Full Time Programs (Number)
Mount Royal College	4302
Red Deer College	3958
Grant MacEwan Community College	3016
Lethbridge Community College	2700
Medicine Hat College	1634
Grande Prairie Regional College	1192
Keyano College	1121
Lakeland College	1109

Source: Alberta Advanced Education (1990).

questionnaire and were interviewed as well. Each of the college participants was asked to complete a short questionnaire which related to demographic factors (Appendix D). These factors were their job title in the college, the length of time in their current position, the length of time that they had been employed at that college, the amount of time they had been associated with postsecondary education, and information with respect to their own postsecondary education. Following is a summary of that data.

Job Titles and Positions of Participants

It was important in this study that only those who had a college-wide view of planning be included. The contact person in each college was instructed to nominate such individuals. Table 3.5 shows the distribution of job titles of the participants.

In recent years, some postsecondary institutions have made structural changes in an effort to reduce the cost of administration. The response by a number of colleges has been to reduce the number of levels of senior management and thereby "flatten" the organizational structure. One result of this has been that the titles associated with various levels in the hierarchy are not consistent between colleges. In order to understand the level in the organization that a participant occupied, the researcher obtained an organizational chart for each institution and located each participant's position on that chart. This provided a more accurate reflection of the relative position each occupied in the college. The eight position titles of Table 3.5 were converted to five position levels, with the level 'one' being from this portion of the study could be related and correlated with those of the questionnaire. For many of the interview questions, the same response categories as in the questionnaire were used. For these questions, the means were reported, while for the remaining interview questions, frequencies of responses were given. Typical quotations were given in some cases for illustrative purposes.

The planning documents obtained from the colleges were also analyzed for information. In this case, each document was examined for information that might enlighten the researcher with respect to the planning process at that institution. For each college, the Institutional Development Plan submitted to the Alberta Department of Advanced Education was one of the documents obtained. Any others thought by college participants to provide insight into the planning process were gathered. It was found, however, that in the majority of cases the planning documents contained little or no reference to the process that had been used in their development. As a result, the researcher relied on the completed questionnaires and personal interviews as the primary sources of data.

An attempt was made in this study to differentiate the responses of those in the most senior positions of college administration from those lower in the hierarchy. This was based on the assumption that the views of the president, for example, better reflected college planning processes than those of someone three levels down in the organization. This analysis was accomplished by rating the responses of those in the higher levels of administration more heavily than those respondents from lower levels. For each college, a comparison of weighted and unweighed responses was made. Although there were differences in response, these differences were not significant. In the same manner, that fact that there were different numbers of participants from each college (Table 3.1) did not appear to affect the outcome of this study.

Profile of Participating Colleges

Eight public colleges were included in this study. Geographically, there were dispersed across the Province of Alberta. Some were located in urban areas while others were rural. As well, the size of the colleges as measured by full-time equivalent (FTE) student numbers also varied. Some of these college characteristics follow.

College Location

A number of the colleges in this study were located in urban areas serving the postsecondary educational needs of large geographical regions, while others served area that were more highly concentrated in terms of population. Table 3.2 shows the rural/urban categorization of the colleges in the study. It is based on the differentiation scheme developed by Michael (1991). As can be seen from Table 3.2, five of the colleges were classified as urban while three were rural.

College Age

The 1960s in Canada were noted for the "College Movement" because many of the public colleges in this country were established during that time, making them 25 to 30 years old. Table 3.3, which gives the age of the colleges in this study, shows this to be the case in the Province of Alberta.

Table 3.2

Location of Participating Colleges Based on a Rural/Urban Categorization

College Location	
Rural	Urban
Grande Prairie Regional College	Grant MacEwan Community College
Lakeland College	Lethbridge Community College
Keyano College	Medicine Hat College
	Mount Royal College
	Red Deer College

Table 3.3

Ages of Colleges in th

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Keyano College

Source: The dates t
Vladicka (1980).

Table 3.5

Job Titles of Participants

Title	f	%f
President	8	14
Vice-President	14	25
Dean	16	28
Director	14	25
Registrar	2	4
Associate Vice-President	1	2
Executive Assistant	1	2
Associate Dean	1	2
Total	57	100

the top (presidential) position and the rest in descending order from there. Table 3.6 shows the number and percentage distribution of participants according to their level in the college hierarchy. From this table it can be seen that approximately 90% of the participants occupied positions in the top three levels of the colleges' organizational hierarchy in this study.

Not only was the relative position of the participant in the organization important, the amount time involved in current and other positions was of interest. The time dimension provided insight into the experience factor and is addressed in the following section.

The Time/Experience Factor for Participants

Each respondent was asked to indicate the length of time that they had been in their present position. The results of this question are given in Table 3.7. As can be observed from this table, slightly less than 95% of the participants had occupied their present position 10 years or less. The mean number of years the respondents were in their present position was 5 (SD=4.19) with a range of 1 to 22 years.

Another time dimension that was of interest in this study was the length of time that the participant had been associated with the college. It would provide insight into the breadth of knowledge that the participant had with respect to the college. Data in this regard are presented in Table 3.8. On average, respondents had been at the college for ten years (SD=7.22) although the distribution appeared to be somewhat bi-modal with 62% of the respondents having spent 10

Table 3.6

Position Levels of Participants

Level	f	%f
1	8	14
2	22	39
3	21	37
4	5	9
5	1	2
Total	57	100

Note: 1 = the highest position of participants in this study (president), and 5 = the lowest position of participants in this study .

Table 3.7

Length of Time in Current Position

Time (Years)	f	%f
1 - 5	37	65
6 - 10	16	28
11 - 15	3	5
16 - 20	0	0
21 - 25	1	2
Total	57	100

Table 3.8

The Length of Time Employed at Present College

Time (Years)	f	%f
1 - 5	18	32
6 - 10	17	30
11 - 15	6	11
16 - 20	10	18
21 - 25	5	9
Total	57	100

years or less and 38% having been at the college for 16 years or more. The range of years that the respondents had worked their current college was 1 to 27 years.

The final time dimension significant to this study was the length of time that the participant had been involved in postsecondary education as a source of employment. It was proposed that the longer the respondent had been associated with this sector, the greater would be the level of understanding of the planning processes of colleges and the issues that relate to planning. The results for this area are given in Table 3.9. The average number of years that participants had been employed in postsecondary education was 17 (SD=5.87). The distribution for these factor appeared to be relatively normal. Participants' experience in postsecondary education covered the range of 1 to 28 years.

It was interesting to note that a number of participants had experience in organizations other than their current college. This experience could bring a different perspective to planning. Table 3.10 provides information regarding this other experience. In total, 29 participants had worked in organizations other than the one in which they were currently employed. Most of these had worked in other colleges prior to the current one. Conversely, which was interesting to note, was that while 29 participants had worked in other settings previously, 28 of the 57 college participants indicated that they had worked only in their current organization.

The final demographic variable for which data were collected was that of the postsecondary education of the participant. Information for this factor is provided

Table 3.9

Length of Time Employed in Postsecondary Education

Time (Years)	f	%f
1 - 5	3	5
6 - 10	4	7
11 - 15	12	21
16 - 20	23	40
21 - 25	13	23
26 - 30	2	4
Total	57	100

Table 3.10

Participants With Experience in Other Organizations

(N = 57)

Type of Organization	f	%f
College	14	25
University	5	9
Other Public Sector	4	9
Private Sector	2	4
Technical Institute	2	4
Military	2	4

in the following section.

Postsecondary Educational Experience of Participants

Participants were asked to indicate the discipline and highest level of their postsecondary education. Table 3.11 presents this data. This table shows that, in general, the respondents in this study were educated at the post-graduate level and that for most of them, their studies focused on education.

The Association of Selected Contextual, Institutional, and Demographic Variables With College Planning

The focus of this study was the planning process used in eight public colleges in the Province of Alberta. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that various statements were reflective of current planning practices, and should be reflective of planning under desirable conditions. A measure of the quality of the planning processes was determined for each college (see Chapter 6). An exploration of the extent to which selected contextual, institutional, and demographic variables were associated with overall measures of planning was also conducted. Whether or not there were variables associated with the quality of college planning was of interest. The results of this examination are summarized in Table F.13. Data in this table show that there were three variables which were significantly correlated with college planning. Both the participative nature of planning and the college's governing structure where highly, positively correlated with the college planning index, while the respondent's time in the current position was negatively correlated with quality

Table 3.11

The Discipline and Highest Level of Postsecondary Education of Participants

Highest Level	Discipline				
	Education	Science	Arts	Business	Total
Diploma		1			1
Bachelors	2	3	2	3	10
Masters	11	1	9	9	30
Doctorate	11	3	2		16
Total	24	8	13	12	57

planning.

Summary

This study was designed to examine the planning processes of the public college sector in the postsecondary educational system in Alberta, and to relate them to a normative model of strategic planning. This chapter presented an overview of this system and indicated those (eight) colleges that were included. The sources of data consisted of questionnaires, and structured interviews. In total, 57 individuals from this sector participated in the study. For a macro-view of colleges and their role in the postsecondary educational system in Alberta, three senior administrators employed by the Alberta Department of Advanced Education were interviewed.

Efforts were made in this study to comply with validity and reliability conditions. The questionnaire and interview guide were both pilot-tested prior to their use, and summaries of interviews were verified by participants. Two colleagues of the researcher acted as independent judges for a random sample of responses and inter-rater reliability analyses were conducted on the results. Further, split-half correlations were performed to determine the degree of reliability. All test results indicated trustworthy information.

In this chapter, the colleges that participated in this study were characterized along a number of dimensions. They were located in both rural and urban areas and varied considerably in size, but were approximately the same age since most were established in the 1960s.

Demographic characteristics of the individuals who participated in the study were also examined. The length of time that the participants had been in their present positions, in the current organization and in postsecondary education was reviewed. In addition, the position the participants occupied in the college hierarchy and their level and type of post secondary education were noted. Based on the results found here, the participants were well qualified to provide answers to the research questions that formed the basis of this study.

A number of underlying relationships and concepts basic to this study were examined in this chapter. Differences and correlations that occurred in the responses to the questionnaire and the structured interview, as well as those differences in responses relating to current and desirable planning processes were examined for significance. In terms of the responses to the two types of survey instruments, of six common areas, three proved to have differences that were significant. It was also determined in this chapter that in the majority of cases where there were differences in responses to current and desirable forms of planning, the differences were significant.

Another set of relationships that were examined in this chapter were in reference to variables that were associated with quality college planning. Specifically, selected contextual, institutional, and demographic variables were correlated with a measure of college planning to determine the strength of the association. Results of these analyses suggested that the better planning processes were associated with colleges characterized by highly participative processes, governing structures that supported the planning effort, and participants who were relatively new to their position.

Chapter 4

THE CONTEXT OF COLLEGE PLANNING

This study focused on the planning processes of eight public colleges in Alberta. All research activities associated with this study were guided by this general research question:

> *Under conditions of change in the internal and external environments of colleges, what planning efforts are being undertaken, what characteristics of effective planning are evident, and how might planning in colleges be improved?*

One of the major themes that arose from this study was that the context (decision-making environment) in which the planning processes of public colleges were conducted was an important dimension (see Figure 2.1). The backdrop against which planning occurred in this study varied considerably and appeared to contribute to, but was separate from, the processes themselves. In this study, the context of planning was seen to include factors such as those factors motivating colleges to engage in planning, the effect of the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process on college planning, the political nature of planning activities, variations in college planning structures, and the level of participation evidenced in the planning processes. Specific research questions were designed for each contextual element. Results from the study which relate to the planning context in colleges are reported separately from those that relate to the processes of planning. This chapter presents those results of the study which relate to contextual factors while Chapter 5 provides results related to the process.

The Impetus for Planning

Specific Research Question 1: What factors, internal and external to the college, motivate planning?

In the structured interview, participants were asked to indicate those factors which have tended to prompt the college to engage in planning. Table 4.1 summarizes the responses to this question. As the data this table show, 48 participants suggested ten different factors which prompted college planning. The most frequently mentioned factor was that the college appeared to have a history of planning and that it was not the result of any special factor or set of conditions. One participant stated that:

> We have always been involved in long-term planning. Planning helps us define what we would like to do as well as those things we should not do. If funds do come along, we are ready. In times of retrenchment, planning is important in order to guide the tough decisions and make them rational.

This comment does not reflect the process of planning but it does suggest that, whatever **planning** meant to the participant, it has always played a major role at the college. In contrast to this, one participant stated that "Although planning is very important, we don't do it very well around here. We do it when we are trying to justify something."

The second most frequently mentioned factor as an impetus for college planning was reference to senior administrators' desire that planning be a priority for the college. This factor was suggested by 10 participants. It would appear that for the most part, the motivators for planning originate inside the college as

Table 4.1

Frequency of Mention of Factors Which Motivated Colleges to Plan

Factor	f	%f
Planning has been an ongoing activity/cycle	17	30
Senior officials' commitment to planning	10	18
A directive of the Board	6	11
Reduced government grants	3	5
Advanced Education's Development Plan request	3	5
Staff changes	2	4
Decreased enrolments	2	4
Advanced Education program policy directives	2	4
Enrolment growth	2	4
Physical plant expansion	1	1
No response	9	16
Total	57	100

opposed to outside.

One participant had interesting insights with respect to not being motivated to plan:

> A mind set that is not prepared to openly plan is one based on protectionism. When one plans in the appropriate ways, you are leaving yourself open to scrutiny of everyone including government who may come in and decide to make wholesale changes. Not to plan is a means of protection due to the openness of the process. Every institution plays its cards close to its chest.

The Influence of the Government's Budgeting Processes

Specific Research Question 2: What effect does the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process have on college planning activities?

Although this research question centers on the role of the government (particularly the Alberta Department of Advanced Education Department) in the colleges' financial planning activities, the over-arching influence that the Department has in the planning and management of public colleges is important to examine. As indicated previously, three senior administrators from the Alberta Department of Advanced Education were interviewed in order to ascertain their views on the role of the Department vis-à-vis the public colleges. One government participant summarized this role by indicating that "The department is seen as being at the centre of the system, that it has a vantage point that no one else has. That position affords the Department an opportunity and a responsibility to coordinate." As a result of this responsibility to coordinate the system of postsecondary education in Alberta, the Department issued a request that each institution prepare a long-term plan. This request was termed

Guidelines for System Development. As one Department official stated:

> The Guidelines were to recognize that there were benefits to all parties from such long range planning. The institutions have responded extremely well to all of this. Several (not all) have commented how useful the process was to their own institution, that the formulation of the mission statement for example was a healthy exercise. It got them thinking about where they were heading and why they were going in that direction. I don't think it's been an easy process for them, when you try to get concurrence on a single statement that articulates what you are all about.

One motivating factor (related to system coordination) for the Guidelines for System Development was the need for individual institutional planning to occur in the context of the rest of the system. According to one participant:

> The Guidelines made the plans of each institution much more public than they were before. If a member of a system is to understand and plan on the basis of what the system is thinking of doing, it has got to be aware of what other institutions are thinking of and planning on. It's leading to better cooperation.

As well as performing a coordinating function for the system of postsecondary education in the province, the Alberta Department of Advanced Education also provides an interpretive one. The Department sees its role as providing an interpretive conduit between the political motives of government at the macro-level and the institutions themselves. One Department official said:

> I think it is the responsibility of the Department to respond to the questions of institutions about where the province is heading. A lot of times, political priorities are not articulated at an operational level. One of the roles of the Department is to work between the broader order of the provincial goals and translate them into actions that might be considered by the colleges. It's an interpretive role.

At more specific level, the Department annually determines the amount of funding available for each institution in the system. This is the area referred to in

Specific Research Question 2. Every year, generally in January or February, the provincial government announces its plans for the upcoming fiscal year with respect to changes in its grants to its agencies. The Minister of Advanced Education makes this announcement with reference to the grants to base funding that will apply to the postsecondary educational system. The individual institutions then use that information to complete their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. The purpose of this research question was to determine the extent to which this (budgeting) process influenced the long-term planning activities of the public colleges. Answers to this question were solicited in both the structured interview and the questionnaire.

In the interviews, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which the annual budgeting process of the provincial government influenced the long-term planning activities of the college. Although this question was open ended, each transcribed comment was coded using the same response categories as those in the questionnaire. As a result, for each participant the response to the issue of the effect of government budgeting practices on planning could be monitored for consistency. For the questionnaire, participants were asked to respond to the question as it would relate to both current and desirable college planning processes. The results for this research question are presented in Table 4.2. The major finding from this table is that under current conditions, planners in colleges appear to agree with the statement that government annual budgeting processes have an influence on long term planning activities (a mean of 3.04 to 3.22). The

Table 4.2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Level of Agreement That the Annual Budgeting Activities of Government Have a Significant Influence on the Planning Process

(N = 57)

	Current Processes		Desirable Processes	
Data Source	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Questionnaire	3.04	0.70	2.49	0.68
Interview	3.22	0.73	n/a	n/a

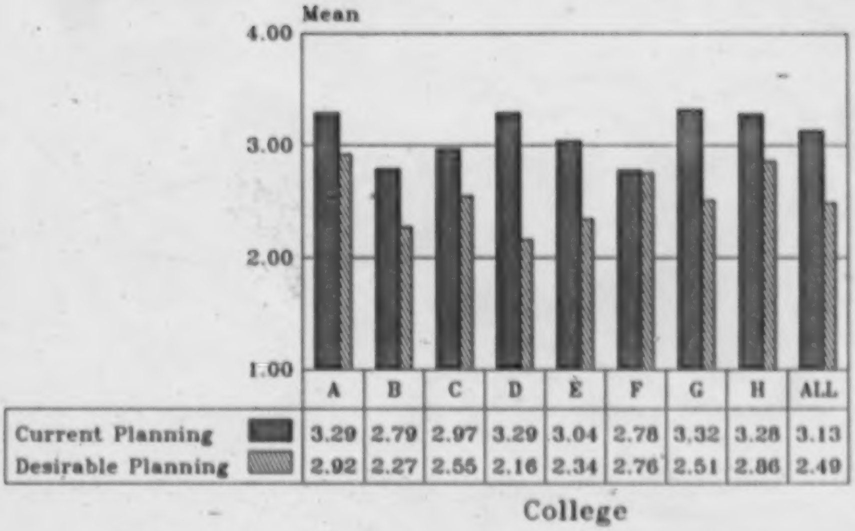
Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

following are comments from respondents which indicate the kind of influence that is felt:

> On one hand you plan for certain directions but the budget will always drive it. It detracts from planning. We raise the expectations of people too high.
>
> It's tough to rationalize (short term funding and long term planning), and it creates frustration-- there is no question about it. You can do a lot of planning and then realize that it was for nought. I'm not sure what the answer is, whether the government is in a position to make those kinds of long term commitments relative to funding. I think that if it were possible to rationalize the two, it has to start at the top with the government.

The way in which the annual planning process influences the planning process of colleges is to create some uncertainty with respect to the level of funding, thus creating a difficult situation in terms of planning for the long term. Data in Table 4.2 suggest that under desirable planning conditions, government budgeting activities would have a smaller influence (mean = 2.49). One participant stated that "Most strategic changes take time and when you don't know what you are looking at financially from year to year, it's difficult to reallocate resources or make decisions that are longer term in nature because you only have a one year budget plan at any given time."

There was a range of responses between colleges to the question of the influence of the government's annual budgeting process. Figure 4.1 shows for each college in the study the mean response value to this question under both current and desirable planning conditions. The respondents from College F view the influence of government funding processes to be the least bothersome of all colleges (mean = 2.78), while those of College G were most concerned



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 4.1. *Means for agreement that the annual budgeting activities of government have a significant influence on planning process, by college*

(mean = 3.32). Under desirable planning conditions, the participants from College D (mean = 2.16) had the lowest mean for agreement that there should be this kind of influence on the planning process. As well, this college showed the greatest change between current and desirable conditions (difference in mean = 1.13).

A number of participants suggested that the trend should be for colleges to seek alternative sources of funding. As one participant suggested, "I think the president is concerned about it [the affects of government annual budgets] and would like to establish a process that is going to be independent of this annual crisis we have to go through." Another respondent indicated that:

> The approach that we are taking is that we assume that the grants will continue to go down. We are not banking on raising our base budget by that much. What we are looking at are methods to become less reliant on government funding. That's how we hope to affect what we are going to be doing further down the road. We are looking at more cost recovery courses, for example. We will be looking at a larger fund raising area, endowments. We are going to have to become more entrepreneurial in our total outlook.

A further comment by a participant summarized this perspective when he indicated that "We need to keep in touch with the government. They are starting to say that institutions have a life other than one linked to government. Our institution is talking about ways to become less dependent on the government." A college president added that:

> My own view is that what we ought to be striving to do is trying to wean our institutions away from that very close dependency, so that we can build in longer term financial and developmental stability. You can do that only if you plan for the future and you get it right and you actually establish a kind a fiscal stability and independence on the basis of endowments and reserves.

The Political Nature of College Planning

Specific Research Question 3: To what extent are college planning activities political in nature?

When one examines the topic of planning, the issue of getting others to become involved and to accept the consequence of change becomes a reality. To some, this is politics. According to one participant:

> Often planning is not the way we define it. Planning is often how I get people to buy in. So your plan is purely political; not planning what should be done next but rather when you plan, you involve a second party. You have to do something with them to bring them along. Planning often involves change and this is very political.

In the structured interview phase of data collection for this study, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which the planning processes at their college were political. The responses to this question were coded by using the same "1" to "4" categorization as in the questionnaire. Respondents as a group did not tend to strongly agree or strongly disagree that planning processes were political in nature (mean = 2.54 and SD = 0.90). The level of agreement was approximately midway between "agree" and "disagree." A college vice-president indicated that:

> I have been amazed that so few political movements have been shown. If it were realized in the institution that this [plan] is going to be meaningful and used, the political activity would have been heightened. Also, people were allowing the situation to flow a little more because of the new people in senior administration.

This respondent suggested that faculty and staff did not appear to believe that the planning process had outcomes that were to be taken seriously; therefore, the political overtone to the process was somewhat diminished. Further, individuals in this college were prepared to accept change because some people in senior administrative roles were newly appointed.

The political nature of planning appeared to become more evident with increases in the specificity of the process. As one college administrator stated:

> Part of our problem is that we don't set priorities. All our goals are equal. There's no ranking. Politics becomes more rampant at the priority-setting level. There is some problem of linkage between the plans and the budget. This could explain in part the minimal political nature of our planning.

In this same vein, a different participant suggested that:

> We are starting to feel it [the political pressure] now. Initially it was excitement. Initially it was dreaming. Now because of budget realities, people are saying "in order for me to get this item, I am going to have to fight for it." We have started over the last couple of months to get that tension.

The fact that the political nature of planning was more evident when plans become more specific was further reinforced by another participant who indicated that "The setting of broad institutional goals is less vulnerable to petty politics than at the lower, more academic levels."

Another dimension with respect to the political nature of planning was the existence of political forces external to the college that found their way into the planning process. For example, a college administrator observed that:

> There is no question that we work with the MLAs, so that on that level planning is very political. If we are going to expand, one of the key jobs is to get the MLAs to agree. Then we have a strong political force within the government. We are funded by government and there is absolutely no question that you cannot escape politics.

The consultative nature of planning was commonly perceived to be related to political dimensions. As one participant stated, "We are changing our processes to be more consultative so that with an expanded management group, the amount of politicking that can go on probably will diminish."

The perception of study participants with respect to the political nature of planning did not appear to vary greatly between colleges (Figure 4.2). For all participants, the mean response value to this question was 2.54. The college wherein the participants had the lowest level of agreement with the statement that college planning was political was College B (mean = 2.22), while for College E the level of agreement was the highest (mean = 3.17).

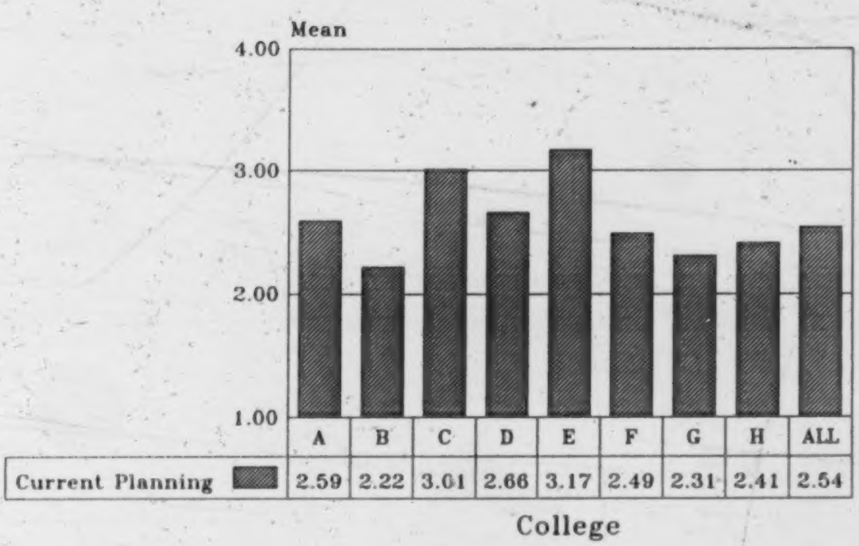
Planning Structures

Specific Research Question 4: What structure is used to facilitate college planning? To what extent does the President lead the process?

The way that college administrators choose to organize to perform the institutional planning process was an important element in the study. As well, the role of the president became an issue that was reviewed. Each of these two factors is discussed in turn.

Structural Issues

Those who were interviewed were asked to describe the structure used to conduct the planning activities. Data in Table 4.3 show that in the majority of the cases (58%), respondents indicated that existing committees carried out the planning function in their respective colleges. The next most frequently mentioned structure was that of forming a committee specifically charged with the responsibility of conducting long-range planning for the college. At one college (with six respondents), the long-range planning process was conducted by a committee that was struck by, and reported directly to, the Board. In those cases



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 4.2 *Means for agreement that the college planning processes are political in nature, by college*

Table 4.3

Frequency of Mentioning of Various Planning Structures Used

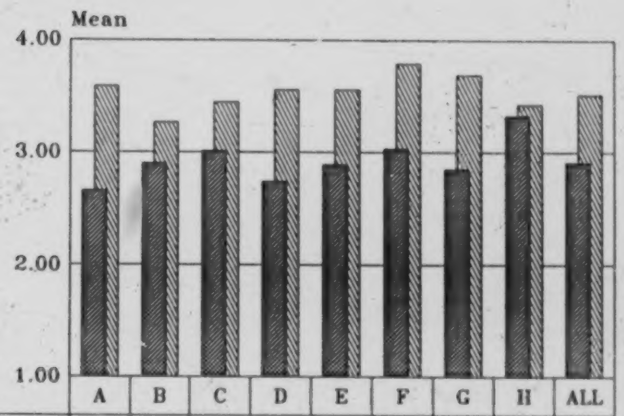
Structure	f	%f
Use of existing committees	33	58
A special planning committee	15	26
A planning committee of the Board	6	11
No response	3	5
Total	57	100

where the existing committee structure was relied upon to conduct college-wide planning, the committee was a senior level administrative committee that consisted of the top two or three levels of the organization. Specially designed planning committees tended to be comprised of representatives of most of the college constituents.

The issue of the governing structure of the college and its relationship to planning was addressed in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which this structure was supportive of planning efforts. The results of this question indicate that respondents' perceptions were between "disagree" and "agree" (closer to "agree") with respect to the governance structure supporting college planning efforts (mean = 2.91 and SD = 0.70). If college planning followed desirable processes, the governing struetures would be more supportive than they appeared to be at the time of this study (mean = 3.52 and SD = 0.50). According to Figure 4.3, there was little variation between colleges with respect to agreement that the governing structures supported planning under current conditions (mean = 2.66 to 3.33), and even less variation under desirable conditions (mean = 3.27 to 3.79).

The President's Role

The issue of the president's role in college planning activities arose in this study. Although there were no specific questions related to the role of the president in planning, comments by participants were observed. In seven of the eight colleges, the president was seen as the leader in the planning process. The



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	▨	2.66	2.90	3.01	2.74	2.89	3.03	2.85	3.33	2.91
Desirable Planning	▧	3.59	3.27	3.45	3.56	3.56	3.79	3.69	3.43	3.52

College

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 4.3 *Means for agreement that the governing structure of the college facilitates planning, by college*

structure of the planning activities did not seem to dictate whether or not the president was an active participant. That is, whether the college chose to use existing committees for planning or to chose to form special-purpose ones, the president took the leadership role in the majority of colleges. According to a study participant:

> We don't have a long term planning committee, but in terms of the responsibility from the executive standpoint it would certainly be the president [giving the leadership]. I think the Board has to also assume some of the responsibility. But to be honest I think it is the president that takes the initiative and more or less steers or guides the Board through exercises that result in some kind of plan.

Another respondent indicated that "The point man is the president and that is who it should be. Then he brings with him his management team and Board of Governors. He finds the path and lets them fill in the blanks." Another participant suggested that "[the president] is very strong at planning, and is also a visionary and is a good complement to those that are good at management."

The Participative Nature of College Planning

Specific Research Question 5: To what extent are college planning processes participative? To what extent do participants receive feedback with respect to their contributions to the planning process?

The issue of the participative nature of the planning processes was addressed in both the questionnaire and the interview, while the question of feedback to participants was addressed only in the structured interview.

Participation in Planning

As indicated above, participants responded to the issue of the participative nature of their respective planning processes in both the questionnaire and in the structured interview. Table 4.4 is a summary of the results related to this question. Participants in this study tended to agree that the planning processes were participative (mean = 3.25 and 3.17). The level of agreement that planning processes should be participative increased under desirable planning conditions (mean = 3.63). According to one participant:

> My perception of the lack of participation is that people have to see a reward for participating. While we have had these plans, there hasn't been any reward or obvious indication that the plan meant anything. So why bother? In some cases, we have had in the plan the same things for ten years. Nothing seems to come of it.

On a college-by-college comparison, College E had the lowest level of agreement regarding the participative nature of planning (mean = 2.88 in Figure 4.4), while College H had the highest with a mean of 3.86. Under desirable planning circumstances, respondents in College H strongly agreed that planning should be participative (mean = 4.00).

This study not only examined the issue of participation in general terms, but it also attempted to determine which groups internal and external to the college tended to participate in the planning process. In the structured interviews, participants were asked to indicate what those groups might be. Table 4.5 provides an overview of the groups or individuals internal to the college that participated in college-wide planning. When asked to indicate those from inside the college who were participants in the planning activities, respondents most frequently mentioned "all internal constituents" (75%). This was taken to include students, faculty, and staff. To a lesser extent, internal associations (student

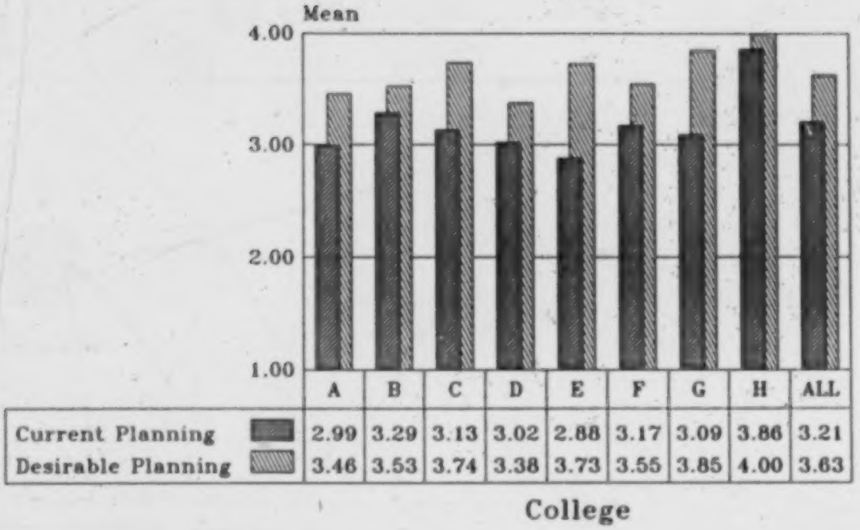
Table 4.4

Means and Standard Deviations for the Level of Agreement That Planning Processes Are Participative

(N = 57)

	Current Processes		Desirable Processes	
Data Source	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Questionnaire	3.25	0.48	3.63	0.49
Interview	3.17	0.64	n/a	n/a

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	■	2.99	3.29	3.13	3.02	2.88	3.17	3.09	3.86	3.21
Desirable Planning	▨	3.46	3.53	3.74	3.38	3.73	3.55	3.85	4.00	3.63

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 4.4 *Means for agreement that planning processes are participative, by college*

Table 4.5

Planning Participants Internal to the College

Groups	f	%f
All internal constituents	43	75
All internal associations	3	5
No response	11	20
Total	57	100

associations, faculty associations, and staff associations) were mentioned (5%). It would appear that the planning processes in colleges tend not to involve internal constituents through their formal associations but rather involve them as individuals in their functions.

Study participants were also asked to suggest those groups and individuals external to the college that were involved in the planning process. Table 4.6 is a summary of those from outside the college that had some role in planning. According to this table, the most frequently mentioned group external to the college that was involved in the planning process was that of Program Advisory Committees (60%). However, as one participant cautioned:

> Advisory committees are very important and they can advise you of trends, but if no one is listening at this end it goes for naught. For colleges to be really adaptable, they have to be very good listeners and at the moment we are not. We have always been in the position to dictate.

The second most frequently mentioned external group was that of the community at large (32%). The most common form of participation of these (external) groups was that of providing information as part of formal and informal environmental scanning activities. One participant suggested though that relations with the community can be strained, especially in times of retrenchment. He stated that:

> Downsizing goes against what the community wants. We do not have under subscribed programs. The issue is one of managing the violation of the expectations of the community. We clearly had not been prepared for that type of planning. This year we are trying to open the process more, and let people know what is going on, and we are getting our financial facts in a more accurate and in a more timely manner. The community now is a little more sensitized to our situation. They are expecting announcements of

Table 4.6

Planning Participants External to the College

(N = 57)

Groups	f	%f
Program Advisory Committees	34	60
Community at Large	18	32
The Board	7	12
Government Agencies	5	9
Labor Market	2	4
The President's Advisory Committee	1	2

> cut backs. There is a new climate out there that we hope will help [the college] when it has to announce that we are going against the expectations of the community.

Feedback to Participants

Participants were asked to comment on the extent of feedback provided to those who gave input into the planning process. As indicated above, only the structured interview was used to obtain information regarding this issue. There was a slight tendency to agree that those participating in the planning process were provided with feedback (mean = 2.77 and SD = 0.73). As one participant stated, "we have not had a good track record in that [feedback]. The individual has trouble seeing his/her idea when it gets generalized. There in no trail." Another respondent commented that:

> As well, in the past we have failed at times to let people know when we have reached our goals or objectives. Feedback is an important element in tying people into the planning process. We do it by performance in terms of how we fulfil our objectives but we need to do it more by division at a very specific, program level. This can then be rolled up into a more comprehensive report as an institutional report that summarizes how we met our objectives this year. We need to celebrate our successes. Let's establish performance indicators and understand which groups or individuals are responsible for the achievement of that objective. Feedback has always been coming in, but now we are more conscious of the need to share that throughout the institution especially since now they are having input into developing the plan. As more people get involved in the planning process, as people buy into the process and can accept the indicators and then the responsibility, they should also have the opportunity to hear the results.

Summary

In this study, the context in which planning was conducted in Alberta's public colleges was examined. Contextual factors were seen to be superimposed on the planning processes themselves. The elements which comprised this context were as follows:

1. factors which motivated the colleges to engage in planning,
2. the affect of the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process on college planning,
3. the political nature of planning activities,
4. variations in college planning structures, and
5. the level of participation evidenced in the planning processes.

For most of the colleges, planning has been an activity entrenched in the routine of adminstration. As a result, most of the respondents did not point to specific events or activities which seemed to prompt planning. For those who did suggest specific motivators for planning, the most frequently mentioned was the senior officials' commitment to planning. This, combined with the observation that participants indicated a history of college planning, would suggest that few factors external to the college have provided an impetus to engage in planning. Further, one must question the respondents' definition of "planning." What did they mean by this term? What processes were utilized? An examination of these processes was the focus in subsequent sections of this study.

The Alberta Government provides grants to colleges on an annual basis. Changes to this funding and their influence on long-term planning were examined. The majority of participants indicated that planning for the long term was made difficult by the annual nature of government funding. They suggested that people became disenchanted with long-term planning activities due to the uncertain nature of the level of financial resources. Many of the respondents indicated that one response to this situation could be a reduced reliance over time on governments for funding, and a movement toward more private sources and cost recovery programming.

The planning activities of public colleges in Alberta were not perceived to be highly political. There was some report of political activity external to the colleges in terms of colleges relying on MLAs to lobby for them at the government level. It was concluded from the comments of a number of participants that the perceived low level of political activity in the planning processes was attributable in part to the fact that few of the colleges' plans dealt with resource allocation, where the greatest potential for political involvement existed.

In conducting the planning exercises, most of the colleges in the study used existing committee structures as opposed to forming specially mandated ones to coordinate the planning function. As a result, the planning was for the most part conducted by members of the upper levels of the college hierarchy. In those colleges where special planning committees were formed, representation tended to be from all constituent groups. In almost all cases, the president was recognized as the leader of the process regardless of the committee structure.

Planning processes in the colleges in this study were for the most part participative. There was an apparent irony in this. Although there was a high level of participation in the process, respondents suggested that the feedback to those who did provide input to planning was poor. The colleges were reasonably adept at getting involvement, but lacked the mechanisms to provide to the participants information on the outcomes of the planning process. Most of the colleges involved all internal constituent groups in the process as well as program advisory committees external to the college.

Chapter 5

THE PROCESS OF COLLEGE PLANNING

As indicated earlier, the major focus of this study was the planning processes of eight public colleges in Alberta. This focus is clarified in the general research question:

> *Under conditions of change in the internal and external environments of colleges, what planning efforts are being undertaken, what characteristics of effective planning are evident, and how might planning in colleges be improved?*

It was suggested in the previous chapter that the context of planning was an important dimension of planning in colleges. Some of the elements and their results were summarized in Chapter 4. As suggested by the general research question, the prime focus of this study was the planning processes. The planning efforts that were the center of the study were those that had college-wide implications and tended to relate to the long term. A review of the literature indicated that strategic planning as a process offered certain benefits to colleges, and this study set out to determine, in part, the extent to which the planning process of colleges contained such elements. The literature relative to effective planning in colleges also suggested that there should be two distinct but integrated phases. One such phase was termed the **strategic phase** wherein planning focused on the long-term direction of the college in such a way that the college takes advantage of opportunities that are identified in line with its mission and strengths.

The other phase of effective planning was termed the **operational phase** and involved the colleges in developing specific, planned (short-term) responses to the strategic priorities identified in the previous phase. The strategic phase is comprised of five elements while the operational phase has three:

Strategic Phase

1. A review and clarification of the college's mission statement,
2. The articulation of the vision for the college,
3. An assessment the college's strengths and weaknesses,
4. An assessment of external opportunities and threats, and
5. The prioritizing of alternative strategic options.

Operational Phase

1. The development of department-level plans,
2. The allocation of resources to department-level plans, and
3. The development and implementation of a formal review and evaluation mechanism.

Each of these elements is the focus of a specific research question. This chapter provides results for each of these major phases of the planning processes for the colleges in the study. A summary of the perceived strengths and weakness, and suggested improvements to planning is also given.

The Strategic Phase of College Planning

Strategic Element 1: A Review and Clarification of the College's Mission Statement

Specific Research Question 6: To what extent is the college mission statement an integral part of the planning process?

The normative model of strategic planning (Figure 2.2) outlines a planning process that has as one of its initial elements a review of the college's mission statement. In both the questionnaire and the structured interview, each participant was asked about the use of the college's mission statement in the planning process. The results for this component of college planning are presented in Table 5.1. Respondents to both the questionnaire and the interview tended to agree (but not strongly) that the mission statement was regularly reviewed and clarified in college planning activities (mean equal to 3.12 and 3.14). When asked to indicate their view with respect to the mission statement under conditions of desirable planning, participants were even more convinced that it should be regularly reviewed and clarified as shown by a mean response value of 3.56. During the structured interviews, participants commented freely about the mission statement, its use, and those who were involved in its review. For example, one respondent indicated that:

> The mission statement that has come out this time has involved everyone who wants to be involved--the community, the region, and provincial people--so the mission statement has changed quite a bit and has heightened some interest. In my view, it does not have some of the elements that are unrealistic, being all things to all people, that our former mission statement may have smacked of.

Another interviewee suggested that the mission statement was now having meaning and that people were beginning to take it seriously when he stated that "People are realizing that it [the mission statement] is having some impact on the way we do business and the words are chosen very carefully." One college president's view of the mission statement was that "it's always the point of departure for all of our planning efforts." For some, the mission statement was too vague as suggested by one participant:

Table 5.1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Level of Agreement That the College's Mission Statement Is Regularly Reviewed and Clarified

(N = 57)

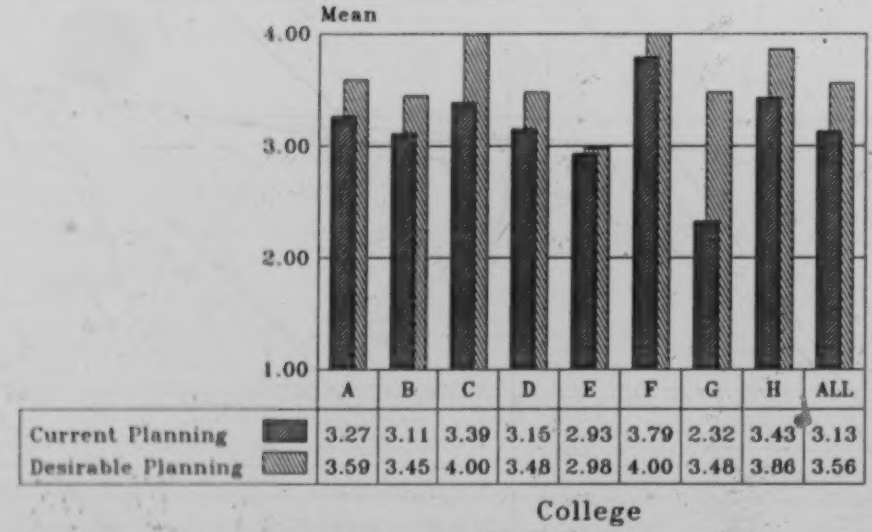
	Current Processes		Desirable Processes	
Data Source	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Questionnaire	3.12	0.76	3.56	0.67
Interview	3.14	0.70	n/a	n/a

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

> We should try to limit our mission. At this time, we don't have anything at [the college] that doesn't fit. It not only covers anything we are doing now, it also covers anything we could ever think of doing. Our mission is not clearly enough defined to help us make quality decisions.

It is interesting to note the variation between colleges that existed in terms of the reported use of the mission statement in planning processes. As can be seen in Figure 5.1, respondents from College F perceived the mission statement to be employed to a greater extent in planning than did all other participants (mean = 3.79). For participants from College G, on the other hand, the mission statement was reported as utilized minimally (mean = 2.32). Under desirable planning conditions, all participants both Colleges C and F strongly agreed that the mission statement should be regularly reviewed and clarified. The greatest increase in usage of the mission statement would be for College G.

Study participants were asked, in the questionnaire, about use of the college's mission statement as a public relations tool as opposed to something that guided the direction of the organization. For the most part, respondents tended to disagree that under current planning schemes the mission statement was utilized as a tool of public relations as opposed to a mechanism to guide the college (mean = 2.02 and SD = 0.67). Under more desirable planning processes, the participants expressed an even greater level of disagreement that the college mission statement should be used for purposes other than to guide the institution (mean = 1.75 and SD = 0.71).



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	■	3.27	3.11	3.39	3.15	2.93	3.79	2.32	3.43	3.13
Desirable Planning	▨	3.59	3.45	4.00	3.48	2.98	4.00	3.48	3.86	3.56

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.1. *Means for agreement that the college's mission statement is regularly reviewed and clarified, by college*

Strategic Element 2: The Articulation of the Vision for the College

Specific Research Question 7: Is a clear and articulated vision of what the college is to become central to college planning?

Most models of effective college planning suggest that while the mission statement is being reviewed, an examination of the clarity and understanding of the vision for the college should be conducted. Table 5.2 presents the study results for this planning element. The results from the questionnaire (Table 5.2) suggested that for the most part respondents agreed that there was a clear and well articulated vision of the college (mean = 3.08). Participants in the interview segment of the study did not have as high a degree of agreement with the statement (mean = 2.65). There were different perceptions expressed with respect to the articulation of the vision for the college. For example, one college president suggested that "It [the vision of the college] is well documented within the planning documents in terms of indicating what our commitments are and where we are going," while another administrator at the same college said that "We do not have a vision that has been proclaimed and which the people have been able to look at and tinker with. . . . We rely on it being passed, like a cultural thing." Apparently these two individuals had different views regarding what a vision was and the extent to which it was clarified and articulated across the college. Under desirable planning conditions, the level of agreement with respect to the clarity and articulation increased over that under current conditions (mean = 3.73). From a practical perspective, one participant observed that:

At management meetings, we don't ask "how does this fit in with our long

Table 5.2

Means and Standard Deviations for the Level of Agreement That There Is a Clear and Well Articulated Vision of the College

(N = 57)

	Current Processes		Desirable Processes	
Data Source	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Questionnaire	3.08	0.80	3.73	0.45
Interview	2.65	0.91	n/a	n/a

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

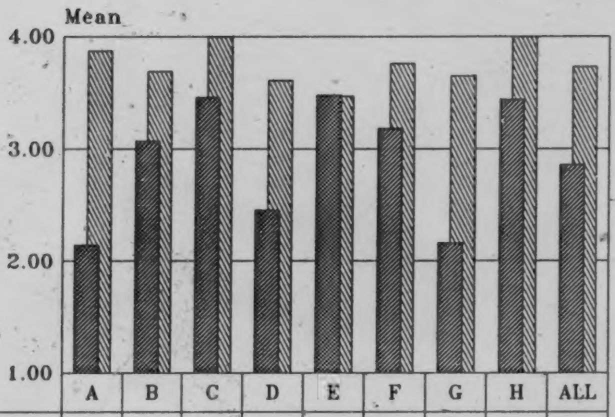
> term vision for [the college]?" Nobody wants to discuss these issues when, in the short term, we are faced with determining how many positions we are going to have to cut.

There appeared to be wide variation in terms of participants' perceptions of the vision for their respective colleges. As is shown in Figure 5.2, the mean response values ranged from a low of 2.14 for College A to a high of 3.48 for College E under current planning conditions. Under desirable conditions, participants tended to agree that the role of the vision in college planning would increase. In fact for Colleges C and H, all respondents strongly agreed that the vision should be clear and well articulated (mean = 4.00).

Strategic Element 3: The Assessment of the College's Strengths and Weaknesses

Specific Research Question 8: To what extent and in what ways are internal factors assessed as part of current college planning activities?

A major component of normative college planning models is an assessment of internal factors and an understanding of their actual and potential influence on college activities. A number of different questions in the questionnaire were developed to solicit information regarding the college's approach to assessing these elements. The major purpose of performing an assessment or audit of internal factors is to develop an understanding of a college's areas of strength and weakness, and ultimately to be able to use this information in preparing responses to perceived opportunities and threats in the external environment. The extent to which efforts were aimed at the measurement of these strengths and weaknesses was determined from the questionnaire in the form of a number of related



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	▨	2.14	3.07	3.46	2.46	3.48	3.18	2.16	3.44	2.86
Desirable Planning	▧	3.87	3.69	4.00	3.61	3.47	3.76	3.65	4.00	3.73

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.2. *Means for Agreement that there is a Clear and Well Articulated Vision of the organization, by college*

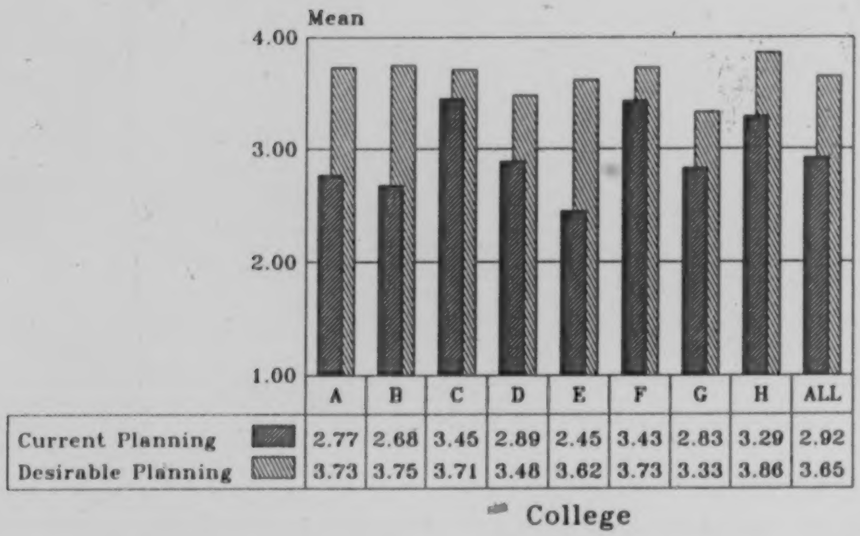
questions. Each of these separate questions is dealt with in turn.

Direct assessment of strengths and weaknesses. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement that the assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses were an integral part of college planning. When asked directly about the college's planning activities as they related to assessing internal strengths and weaknesses, it would appear that respondents' perceptions were between "disagree" and "agree" but closer to "agree" (mean = 2.92 and SD = 0.65). The perception of participants regarding internal assessments varied somewhat. As one participant suggested, "Colleges are not good at assessing their weaknesses. They pretend to be everything to everybody all the time. Each of us has certain strengths, but we don't articulate them very well." Another respondent had a different view:

> I don't think that there is any question about that [the assessment of strengths and weaknesses]. We put together a policy recently on what we call institutional planning or institutional evaluation. Now, institutional evaluation is a buzz word that has become really popular particularly in B.C. in the past couple of years. We don't believe that. We think institutional evaluation is an ongoing process. So to me, the assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses is something we are doing all the time.

When asked to indicate the extent to which internal strengths and weaknesses would be assessed under desirable planning processes, the respondents tended to agree that they should be assessed more rigorously (mean = 3.65 and SD = 0.48).

On an individual college basis, institutions tended to vary widely in their level of assessment of internal factors. As can be seen in Figure 5.3, the mean for the level of agreement that the assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	■	2.77	2.68	3.45	2.89	2.45	3.43	2.83	3.29	2.92
Desirable Planning	▨	3.73	3.75	3.71	3.48	3.62	3.73	3.33	3.86	3.65

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.3 *Means for agreement that the assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses is an integral part of planning, by college*

was integral to the college planning process varied from a low of 2.45 (College B) to a high of 3.45 (College C). Participants tended to agree that the appraisal of internal strengths and weaknesses should be enhanced.

The strengths of colleges. In the structured interview segment of the study, participants were asked to identify the strengths they perceived to be characteristic of the college. A number of different factors of strength were given by the 57 participants. These are summarized in Table 5.3. The most frequently mentioned area of strength in this study was that of a positive relationship with the community (40%). Staff committed to teaching combined with staff committed to students also accounted for 40% of the responses. Those strengths related to programming--strong programs and a comprehensive program mix--accounted for 39% of the responses. Put another way, a positive relationship with the community, dedicated teachers, and a good mix of quality programs were important in terms of strengths of colleges in this study.

Reliance on quantitative data. Another factor related to internal assessments was the extent to which colleges collected and used quantitative data as a basis for planning. This factor related to two issues. One was a structural one in that it dealt with the college's capacity to collect this type of data. The presence of compatible data bases was a concern. The other issue related to the usage of quantitative as opposed to qualitative data. The answer to this was not clear since questions about quantitative and qualitative data were in two separate questions and appeared to be treated independently by respondents. Participants did not

Table 5.3

Frequency of Mention of Various Strengths of Colleges

(N = 57)

Factor	f	%f
Positive relationship with the community	23	40
Staff committed to teaching	15	26
Strong programs	12	21
Comprehensive program mix	10	18
Staff committed to students	8	14
The people in general	4	7
Opportunity for staff participation	3	5
Satisfied students	2	4

tend to agree that quantitative data were used in college planning processes under current planning conditions (mean = 2.31 and SD = 0.64). If conditions were more desirable, most participants agreed that quantitative data would be relied upon more heavily in planning.

Reliance on qualitative data. Questionnaire respondents were also asked to indicate their perceptions regarding the use of qualitative data as a basis of college-wide planning. The results of this question suggest agreement with the statement that qualitative data were important in college planning (mean = 3.15 and SD = 0.50). It is interesting to note that this level of agreement is somewhat higher than that for quantitative data. It would appear that more attention was given to qualitative factors than quantitative ones. Under desirable planning conditions, the level of agreement that qualitative data were important in planning increased (mean = 3.33 and SD = 0.47).

The importance of a stable internal environment. The issue of the stability of the internal environment was addressed in this study. Although internal stability is important, an over emphasis on stability could be at the exclusion of internal flexibility and preclude an awareness of the external environment and its dynamics. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which internal stability was a goal in light of changing external conditions. The results to this question suggest that the level of agreement that efforts were/should be aimed at ensuring a stable internal environment would increase under desirable planning conditions as compared to current ones (mean = 3.27 versus 2.64).

New initiatives originating internally. Another internal factor that was examined in this study was that of new initiatives being a reaction to internal influences such as staff or students. The attempt was to assess the responsiveness of the college to ideas and pressures from internal sources. The perception of college administrators regrading new initiatives being a reaction to inside influences such as staff or students was that those elements did not tend to be a major factor (mean = 2.36 and SD = 0.68). According to these findings, staff and student groups did not have a significant influence on the kinds of new initiatives developed in colleges; nor would participants prefer to see these groups have greater influence under more desirable planning conditions. The level of agreement that staff and students should influence new initiatives would be reduced slightly under desirable planning conditions (means = 2.33).

The importance of analyzing all factors prior to formulating plans. According to some of the literature on college planning, it may not be practicable to wait for exhaustive analyses of all variables before plans are made. Sometimes plans are based on intuitive processes rather than on "hard" data. On the other hand, some decisions are made before a reasonable effort has been made to examine all the relevant factors. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked about their perception of this point as it applied to planning practices in their college. The results for this question indicate that the level of agreement regarding the necessity of formulating plans only after thorough analyses would increase under desirable planning conditions (mean = 3.31 versus 2.51).

Strategic Element 4: The Assessment of External Opportunities and Threats

Specific Research Question 9: To what extent and in what ways are factors external to the college assessed as part of college planning activities?

One of the major thrusts of normative college planning models is an assessment of factors external to the college. As suggested in Chapter 2, strategic planning processes have an external focus rather than an internal one. The term **environmental scanning** is used to refer to this process. Participants in this study were asked, in both the questionnaire and the structured interview, to indicate those efforts that were associated with this element of the planning process. This section presents the results of these questions.

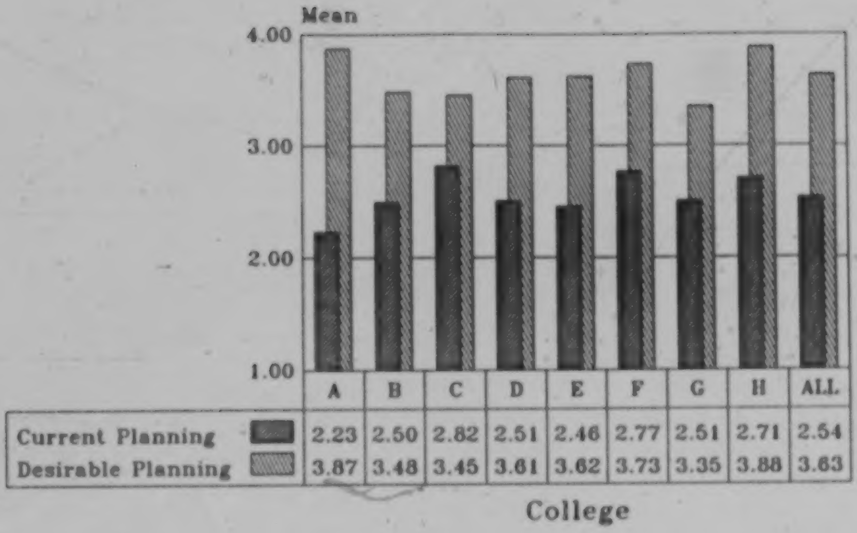
Efforts aimed directly at environmental scanning. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived the college to be actively involved in processes of environmental scanning. The level of agreement that external factors should be regularly assessed increased from a mean of 2.85 under current planning conditions to a mean of 3.60 according to questionnaire responses. In the personal interviews, the level of agreement that environmental scanning was evident in the planning process was somewhat lower (mean =2.22). As one participant suggested:

> There was no call from the community that said we needed a mission statement. The community does not come to the college and say we want this and we want that. There has been some indication from the community that they would like to see third and fourth year university here. That's about all. There are no lobbying groups in the community.

In addition, there was little variation between colleges with respect to the level of agreement about environmental scanning under current conditions, as well as under desirable planning conditions (Figure 5.4).

Methods for anticipating change in external factors. On a more specific level, participants were asked to provide information with respect to the methods used to anticipate the extent and direction of change associated with factors external to the college. At issue was the extent to which college planners assumed that what had happened in the past to external factors could be projected into the future. A question was asked in this regard in the survey instrument. The question focused on the extent to which extrapolation of past trends was the method used for this purpose. Participants tended to disagree that the extrapolation of past trends was the primary method of anticipating change in factors external to the college (mean = 2.31 and SD = 0.50), and that the level of disagreement increased under desirable planning conditions (mean = 2.19 and SD = 0.64).

Assessment of competing institutions. A relatively new phenomenon in postsecondary administration is the recognition that there are other (competing) institutions in the same region and that there is in fact competition for students and resources. One step toward responding to this would be a program of regularly monitoring the activities of competing institutions. Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that this was a regular practice. Participants tended to agree that public colleges in Alberta are not in the habit of regularly assessing competing institutions (mean = 2.18 and SD = 0.55). They agreed that these activities would be enhanced under desirable planning conditions (mean = 3.04).



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.4 *Means for agreement that factors external to the college which represent both opportunities and threats are regularly assessed, by college*

New program development as a result of external factors. Another indicator of a college's external focus was the extent to which new program initiatives were a response to external factors. A questionnaire item related to this issue. The results indicate that the level of agreement that new programs are/should be the response to external factors changed only slightly from current to desirable forms of planning (mean = 2.75 versus 2.87). The view of one participant was that, "If a need is expressed for a program, we will study the potential for it. The program people are encouraged to read the wind."

Taking advantage of new opportunities. Literature related to effective planning in the postsecondary arena suggests that an important element is the re-positioning of the college in relation to opportunities that have been identified. This step in the process links the internal assessment of strengths and weaknesses with the external examination of opportunities and threats. Participants in this study were given opportunity in the questionnaire to indicate the extent to which the college planning processes included this element. The level of agreement that colleges should re-position themselves to take advantage of new opportunities increased from a mean of 2.84 under current planning conditions to a mean of 3.44 under desirable conditions.

Strategic Element 5: The Prioritizing of Alternative Strategic Options

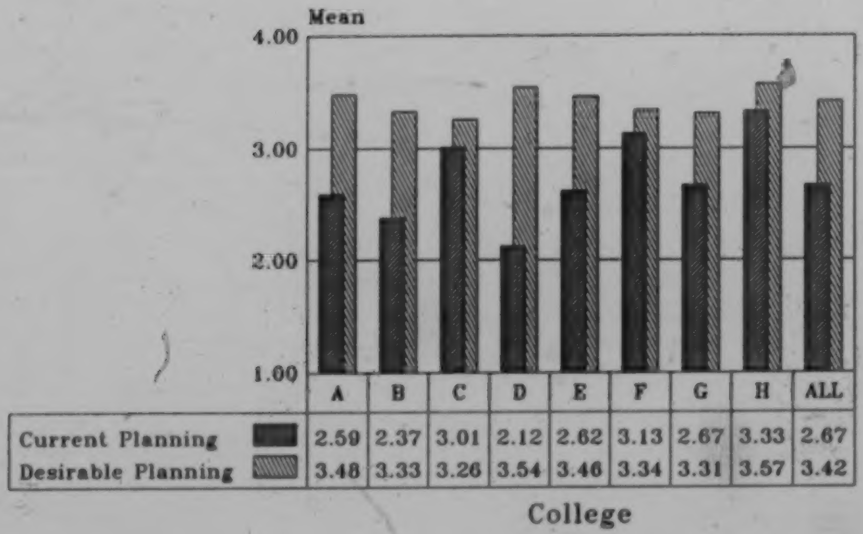
Secondary Research Question 10: Do planning processes include efforts aimed at prioritizing alternative strategies?

Not all opportunities that are identified by the planning process can be realized. Generally, budgetary realities constrain the number of plans that are practicable. As a result, planners must examine the alternative courses of action and determine which ones are feasible. This requires a process of setting priorities. In the questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate to what extent a process of priority-setting was part of the planning regime. When the perceptions of participants were compared for the extent of agreement that priority-setting is/should be integral to the planning process under current and desirable planning conditions, the level of agreement increased from a mean of 2.67 to a mean of 3.42.

There appeared to be wide variation between colleges in terms of current practices of priority-setting. Figure 5.5 indicates that the mean response value for agreement that this was an integral planning element ranged from a low of 2.12 for College D to a high of 3.33 at College H. This range narrowed for planning under more desirable conditions with the lowest value at 3.26 for College C and the highest at 3.57 for College H.

The Operational Phase of College Planning

An integral part of the normative model of strategic planning is the inclusion of a planning phase which takes the outcomes of the strategic phase and translates them into operational elements. If that phase were omitted, then the end of the planning process would result in a set of general directions without firm indicators and commitment in terms of how to achieve them. A number of questions related to the operational phase of planning were included in the study.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning ■	2.59	2.37	3.01	2.12	2.62	3.13	2.67	3.33	2.67
Desirable Planning ▨	3.48	3.33	3.26	3.54	3.46	3.34	3.31	3.57	3.42

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.5 *Means for agreement that provision is made during the planning process for prioritizing alternative courses of action*

Operational Element 1: The Development of Departmental-level Plans

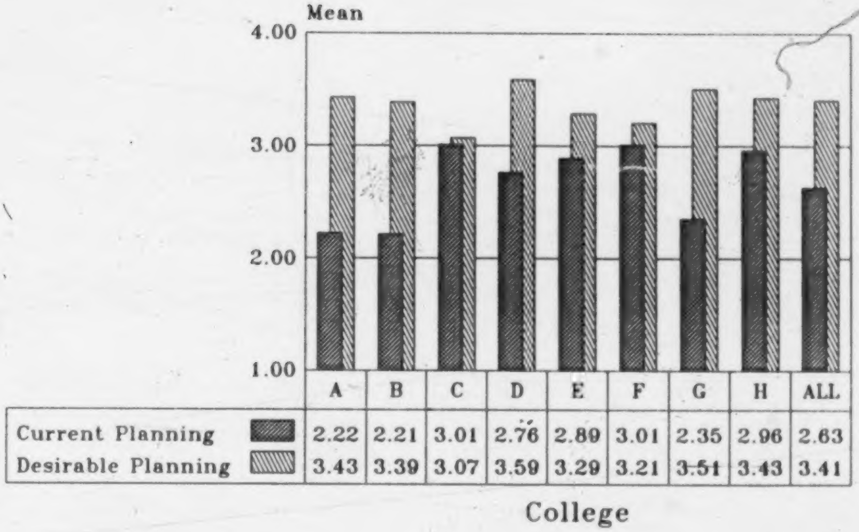
Specific Research Question 11: Do colleges include department-level plans in attempts to operationalize their planning processes?

In the questionnaire, two questions were developed that related to department-level planning. Results for each are presented in this section.

A major step in making strategic plans become operational is that of planning at both the department level and the college level. For the most part, plans must become functional at the department or unit level. This issue was addressed in the questionnaire and the results would suggest that participants did not perceive that comprehensive plans, resulting from the integration of departmental with college-wide plans, characterized current college planning (mean = 2.63 and SD = 0.68). The level of concern became more evident when the current state of planning was contrasted with desired forms of planning. The mean response value for agreement that planning at both the department level and college level should occur increased to 3.41 (SD= 0.55). This was supported by the comments of one participant who suggested that:

> There isn't an integrated planning process. There's an annual planning process where the department heads (both academic and non-academic) would establish their priorities and their objectives and their job loads and the instructors' job loads and then it would go on up through the budget process, so that I think from that perspective it's a planning process but it is not as it should be.

An examination of the data in Figure 5.6 reveals some variation in the integration of department-level plans with college-level plans. Respondents from both Colleges C and F agreed that planning at both levels occurred (mean =



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	▩	2.22	2.21	3.01	2.76	2.89	3.01	2.35	2.96	2.63
Desirable Planning	▨	3.43	3.39	3.07	3.59	3.29	3.21	3.51	3.43	3.41

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.6 *Means for agreement that plans at both the department level and the college level are prepared and then integrated to form a comprehensive plan, by college*

3.01), while those from Colleges A and B tended to disagree with the statement (means = 2.22 and 2.21 respectively). For all colleges, this phase of planning would be enhanced under desirable planning forms.

Participants in this study were also asked to indicate the extent to which efforts were aimed at not only formulating plans, but also at preparing plans that would result in them being implemented. The level of agreement that planning processes should include both formulation and implementation phases increased when current processes were contrasted with desirable processes (mean = 2.72 versus mean = 3.43). A study participant observed that "There is not enough linkage between the institutional plans and the operational plans. The linkage is only informal in people's minds. We pride ourselves in planning but our major problem is a divorce of planning from what we actually do."

Operational Element 2: The Allocation of Resources to Department-Level Plans

Specific Research Question 12: To what extent are resource allocation decisions an integral part of college planning?

Formal commitment to plans is made complete when budgets are allocated to them. The seriousness of the commitment is manifested by the amount, kind, and timing of resources that follow planning decisions. In both the questionnaire and the structured interview, each participant had opportunity to indicate the extent to which resource allocation decisions were linked to the plans that are made. Under current planning schemes, participants tended to disagree that plans were linked to budgets. As one participant stated, "Too many people see planning as window dressing unless the things they really believe in are done--by linking plans to the budget." Another participant expressed concern about the linkage between plans, budgets, and priorities by indicating that:

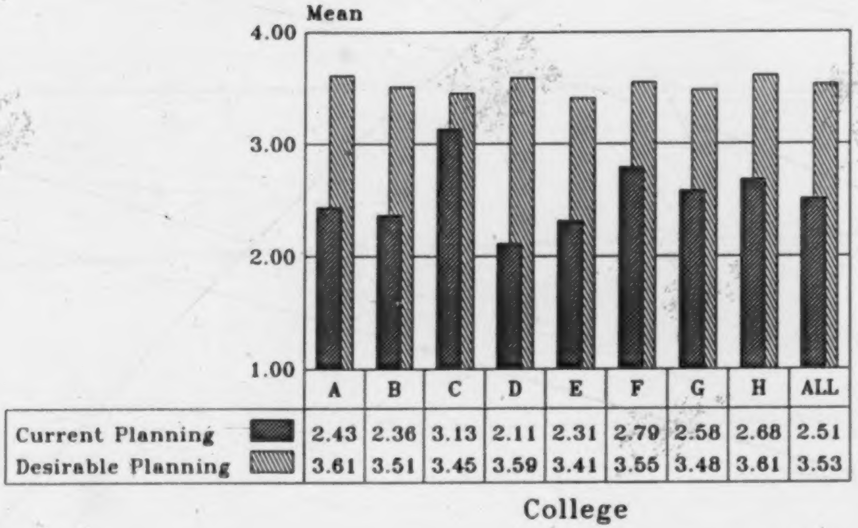
> Part of our problem is that we don't set priorities. All our goals are equal. There's no ranking. This makes it hard to tie it to budgets. . . . There is some problem of linkage between plans and the budget. This could explain in part the minimal political nature of our planning.

Under desirable planning processes, participants tended to agree that plans should be linked to budgets (mean = 3.53). One participant stated that "Planning is happening and budgeting should be tied to the plans. Its been a hard process for our people to believe that it is real. As result, some people may be surprised to learn how closely we are following the plan." Looking to the future, another participant said "We have spent a lot of time discussing our ten-year plan, but I hope that we do come up with plans and budgets to expedite them." Data in Figure 5.7 indicates that there was some variation in the level of agreement that plans were linked to budgets under current planning processes (means of 2.11 for College D to 3.13 for College C) but that under desirable planning conditions little variation appeared.

Operational Element 3: The Development and Implementation of a Formal Review and Evaluation Mechanism

Specific Research Question 13: To what extent do colleges engage in processes of evaluation after plans have been implemented?

An important element of any planning process is that of follow-up and review. This phase allows for alterations to be made to plans based upon what has been learned from various iterations of the planning cycle. Corrective action



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.7 *Means for agreement that plans are linked to budgets, by college*

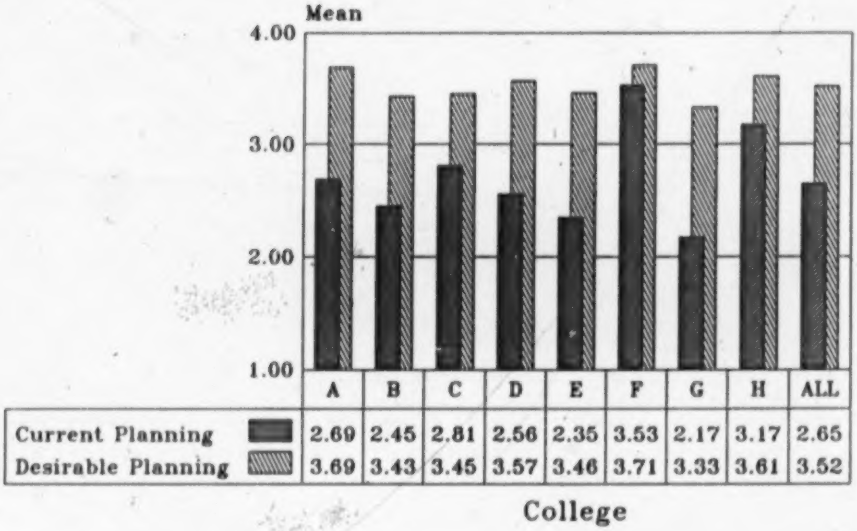
can then be taken to ensure the best possible outcomes result from the planning process. The nature of internal and external variables typical of postsecondary institutions requires that plans be monitored in a formal manner. The issue of evaluation was addressed in this study by way of a question developed for the survey instrument. Most participants agreed that formal evaluation procedures were not in place in terms of monitoring the outcomes of the planning processes. The current mean of 2.65 for all respondents was increased to 3.52, indicating an agreement that improvement would be required under desirable planning schemes.

Wide variations in the perceptions of participants regarding the presence of formal evaluation processes appeared evident in the study. Data in Figure 5.8 indicate that, for this element of current college planning, agreement regarding its presence ranged from a low mean of 2.17 for College G to a high of 3.53 for College F. Under desirable forms of planning, most respondents agreed that this element should receive more attention (mean = 3.52).

Strengths and Weaknesses of Planning Processes and Suggested Improvements

Specific Research Question 14: What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of current planning practices? What improvements are recommended?

Interview participants were asked to indicate what they perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of current planning processes and to suggest ways that the processes might be improved. Each of these areas is dealt with in turn.



		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Current Planning	■	2.69	2.45	2.81	2.56	2.35	3.53	2.17	3.17	2.65
Desirable Planning	▨	3.69	3.43	3.45	3.57	3.46	3.71	3.33	3.61	3.52

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

Figure 5.8 *Means for agreement that following the implementation of plans, a formal evaluation is carried out and modifications are made as necessary, by college*

Strengths of Current Planning Processes

The list of strengths of current planning processes as presented by study participants was extremely short. Of the 57 respondents, 20 had a specific response to the question regarding the strengths of present college planning activities. They all indicated the same response--the prime strength of current college planning practices was that they promoted and enhanced collegiality. To the extent that planning processes were perceived to be participative, collegiality was improved. This was the sole perceived strength of current planning. As one participant recalled, "We have been thrust together as a team due to new players being added (president, etc.). We have built a strong team but I hope that what we see will not fade once the planning process moves to another cycle. Planning has been a good team building device." A slightly different dimension to this element of planning was suggested by a participant when he observed that "The nice thing about colleges is that for those people who do not normally have power, the planning process affords them some opportunity to exercise some power." One participant summarized the collegiality of the process by suggesting that "Possibly the most important part of all of this is the process itself, where we get people to come to some shared understanding of goals and objectives. This can become more important than the plans themselves."

Weaknesses of Current Planning Processes

There were significantly more reported weaknesses than strengths associated with college planning practices. A number of factors were cited. Table 5.4

presents a summary of the findings with respect to the weaknesses of college planning. In total, six areas of weakness were identified by 44 respondents. While collegiality was mentioned as the **strength** of current college planning processes, it was given most frequently as a **weakness** (30% of respondents in Table 5.4). As one respondent commented,

> The current president has said that if you are going to be effected by a decision, you are going to be involved in making that decision. However, the jury may still be out. It is a massive undertaking to involve so many people in decisions. I have concerns that the president won't have the time.

Another participant echoed this concern by indicating that "we go out and ask for so much input that we don't know what to do with it."

The second most frequently mentioned weakness associated with college planning was that, while participants did not see any direct results of the planning activities, their expectations were raised (23% of respondents). The other major weakness, reported by 15% of the respondents, was that the process itself was unclear. In addition, participants suggested other weaknesses such as poor follow-up and feedback, low levels of community involvement, and planning processes that were not effective in times of retrenchment.

Suggested Improvements to College Planning

The final question asked during the structured interview related to the kinds of improvements that would be required to bring current college planning practices in line with the desired forms of planning. Fourteen suggestions were given by the 57 participants. They are summarized in Table 5.5. The most frequently mentioned suggestion for improving the planning processes in

Table 5.4

Frequency of Mention of the Weaknesses of College Planning

Factor	f	%f
Gets bogged down in collegiality	17	30
No results seen, but expectations are raised	13	23
Unclear process	9	15
Poor follow-up and feedback	3	5
Low level of community involvement	1	2
Ineffective in times of retrenchment	1	2
No response	13	23
Total	57	100

Table 5.5

Frequency of Mention of Suggested Improvements to College Planning

(N = 57)

Suggestions	f	%f
A clear, formal planning process	26	46
More resources devoted to planning	11	19
Firm commitment to planning	10	18
Increased level of participation	10	18
Advanced Education to show system leadership	6	11
Improve the feedback loop	4	7
Better use of mission statement	3	5
Better vision/definition for the college	2	4
People should have a college-wide perspective	2	4
Link the plans to the budget	2	4
More time to plan	1	2
Overt commitment from the president	1	2
Improve relations with Advanced Education	1	2
Need a long-term funding guarantee	1	2

colleges was that planning processes should be more clear and formal (reported by 46% of the respondents). Participants seemed to be suggesting that there was no clear, well-articulated planning process to follow. As one respondent suggested "We keep saying that we are going to try to keep to a schedule, and we are always later that we should be. We have to really maintain a proper start date. Time lines get too tight to do a proper job [of planning]." Another respondent had a slightly different point of view regarding the clarity of the process when she indicated

> I think we need to continually articulate what strategic planning is. I think we need to educate our senior administrators on strategic planning. You need to have a shared vision of what strategic planning is, and we need to share that with our internal and external community.

Still another had similar comments about the need for clarity in the process:

> A clear establishment of what you are looking for [is needed]. And so your directives, your procedure, your ground rules are clearly established so that people down in the troops know what you are looking for. This is nearly the most important part of the planning process. People need to see a process with timelines that lead ultimately to budgeting decisions. There is a need for people to sit down and work on that process and definitions.

To some individuals, the need to clarify the process in terms of the leadership role was important. One respondent stated that:

> To some degree, there is a need for clarity about the leadership of planning and whether planning is something that works its way from the bottom up or is really shepherded from the top down. Whether the president is the leader or whether he is the facilitator should be clarified.

Eleven respondents suggested a need for more resources to be devoted to the planning exercise. The resources referred to were both human and financial.

Of the eight colleges in this study, only half of them had a person devoted to institutional research. Of that person's time, only a portion was allocated to planning. As one participant indicated, "I think that planning has been a problem here and will continue to be a problem because of a lack of staff." Another stated that "We need someone at the college who is working on planning and policy making full time rather than have it added to the workload of everyone." Ten respondents suggested that planning would be improved in colleges if there were a firm commitment to planning, and if there were an increase in the level of participation in the process. One respondent stated that "Most people are used to the budgeting process and its elements and timelines. College-wide planning should be the same. Planning should be as formal a process as budgeting."

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a descriptive summary of the processes of planning in the public college sector in Alberta. The elements of planning that were examined were those found in the normative model of strategic planning described in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.2). In this study, each element or component of planning was formed into a specific research question. In this chapter, each component was described in turn and the results from the study presented. In some cases, both the questionnaire and the structured interview were sources of data while for others, one or other of the two provided the data. The results for the process of planning were presented in the sequence in which they appear in the normative models of effective planning in the literature and were related to the elements of both strategic and operational dimensions.

The extent to which the college's mission statement formed an integral part of planning was the first process question to be addressed in the strategic phase. It was found in this study that colleges tended to reference the mission statement consistently as part of the planning process. In some cases though, respondents indicated that the statement was too broad and vague. Participants did not support the usage of the mission statement as a public relations tool as opposed to an important factor in directing the business of the college.

A further component of college planning processes to be examined in this study was that of the use and clarity of the vision of the college's future direction. Participants reported that this element of planning was not as well developed as that of the mission statement. They suggested that under desirable planning conditions, this component would receive much greater attention.

The extent to which colleges assessed internal and external factors was another process question addressed in this study. In terms of the assessments of internal factors, colleges tended to rely more on qualitative data than on quantitative data, and were not rigorous in their assessments of their strengths and weaknesses. The strength most frequently mentioned was that of a positive relationship with the community.

Processes of assessing external factors were also not perceived by participants to be well developed. These processes tended to be rather informal attempts at environmental scanning. Participants reported that efforts aimed at both monitoring the activities of competing institutions, and at re-positioning themselves to take advantage of new opportunities would be enhanced under desirable planning processes.

The final element in the strategic phase of college planning to be examined in this study was the extent to which colleges attempted to prioritize alternative strategies that had been proposed. It was found that, according to participants, improvements in this area were required.

Responses to questions related to the operational phase of college planning were also summarized in this chapter. The results showed that colleges were not proficient at developing implementation plans, developing coordinated plans at both the departmental and institute levels, nor at following through with resource allocations to reflect planning priorities.

The last element of the operational phase to be examined was that related to the existence of formal evaluation and follow-up procedures. It was found in this study that, in general, formal mechanisms designed to assess the effectiveness of planning outcomes were either non-existent or poorly administered.

The final topic to be addressed in this chapter was that of participants' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the current planning processes, and what they would suggested as improvements to these processes. The exclusive strength of current planning in colleges appeared to be the development and enhancement of collegiality across the institution. At the same time, though, planning became bogged down due to collegiality and was cited as the primary weakness of planning in colleges. The most frequently recurring theme in terms of improvements to planning was the need for a clear, formal planning process that was understood by all constituents.

This chapter also reviewed the planning process from the perspective of individual colleges. In most cases, wide variations were observed under current planning processes for each major element in that process. It was interesting to note that, with exception of the use of the mission statement, there tended to be general agreement with respect to the importance of these major planning elements under desirable conditions.

Chapter 6

A SYNTHESIS OF STUDY RESULTS

In this study, planning in Alberta's public colleges was examined from the perspective of the context in which the planning was conducted, as well as from the point of view of the elements in the process itself. The extent to which colleges incorporated the elements of effective planning was in part a function of the context or environment in which the planning was conducted. Factors such as the degree of participation, the level of politics in the process, and the form of committee structures were considered to be part of this context. The detailed findings for the contextual dimension of college planning were presented in Chapter 4.

The elements of the planning process were the focus of Chapter 5. In keeping with normative models of effective (strategic) college planning, eight elements were identified and results presented for each. The literature in this area suggested that there were two phases to this planning process--one was strategic in nature, while the other was operational. The results of this study, in terms of these planning dimensions, were presented in Chapter 5 along with respondents' comments regarding the strengths and weaknesses of current planning processes and suggested improvements. While the focus of Chapter 5 was the specific elements of the planning process, a composite view of all the elements at the college and sectoral level was not given. The objective of this chapter is to present a profile of planning in colleges in Alberta and to indicate the kinds of variations that existed between colleges in terms of their planning profiles. This chapter summarizes, on a college-by-college basis, the extent of change to planning elements suggested by participants in order to bring current planning processes in line with desired planning.

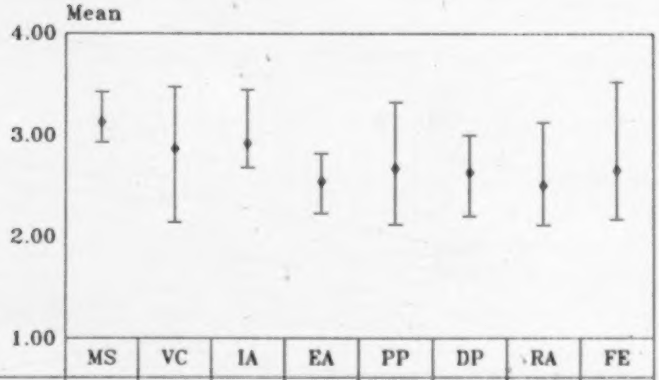
Planning Profiles in Colleges

Not all colleges utilized the elements of planning to the same extent. Similarities and differences existed with respect to the approach each college took to the process of long-term planning. In the literature on effective college planning, eight elements have been identified as forming the basis of the process. Respondents in this study were asked to indicate, on a four point scale, the extent to which they perceived that their college engaged in each element. The mean response for each element was taken as a measure of its application. The larger the mean response, the greater the extent to which the respondents perceived that element to be evident in the planning process for the college. Respondents were also asked to indicate. for the same set of elements, the degree to which these elements would be present under desirable processes of planning. A mean response value was also determined for desirable conditions. These elements are presented together and form a profile of planning. This section summarizes planning profiles under both current and desirable forms of planning for the set of colleges in this study.

A composite profile of planning in public colleges under current conditions is presented in Figure 6.1. The role of the mission statement received the highest mean response for the level of agreement regarding its presence in college planning (mean = 3.13). For this planning element, means ranged from a low of 2.93 in one college to a high of 3.43 in another. The planning element with the lowest mean response value was that of the allocation of resources to plans (mean = 2.50). Widest variations between colleges were reported for the planning element related to the development of formal plan evaluation mechanisms (a range of 1.36 in mean response values).

A composite planning profile was also developed for desirable planning processes (Figure 6.2). In general, all participants tended to agree that planning processes should be enhanced. The planning element which participants agreed should be predominant was that of the vision for the college (mean = 3.73), followed by the assessment of internal factors (mean = 3.65) and external factors (mean = 3.63). The planning element for which there was the greatest difference between colleges was that of the mission statement, while the place of resource allocation processes in college planning received the least differences between colleges.

A comparison of Figure 6.1 with Figure 6.2 reveals that participants perceived that planning process should be altered from current circumstances. Not all elements of planning would require the same degree of enhancement. Figure 6.3 summarizes for each planning element the difference between the means for planning under current conditions and the means for planning under



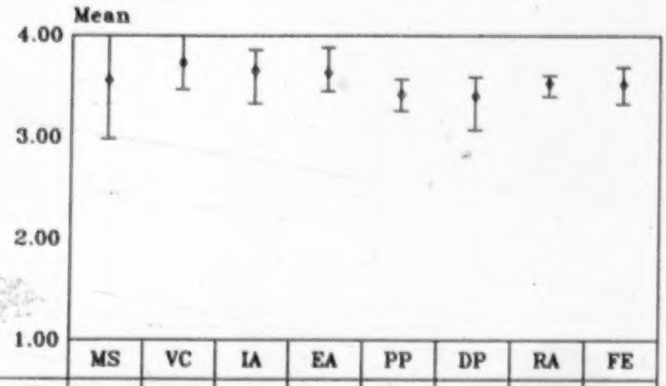
		MS	VC	IA	EA	PP	DP	RA	FE
High	Ī	3.43	3.48	3.45	2.82	3.33	3.00	3.13	3.53
Low	I	2.93	2.14	2.68	2.23	2.12	2.20	2.11	2.17
Mean Response	◊	3.13	2.86	2.92	2.54	2.67	2.63	2.50	2.65

Planning Element

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

Figure 6.1. *A profile of planning under current conditions, all colleges*



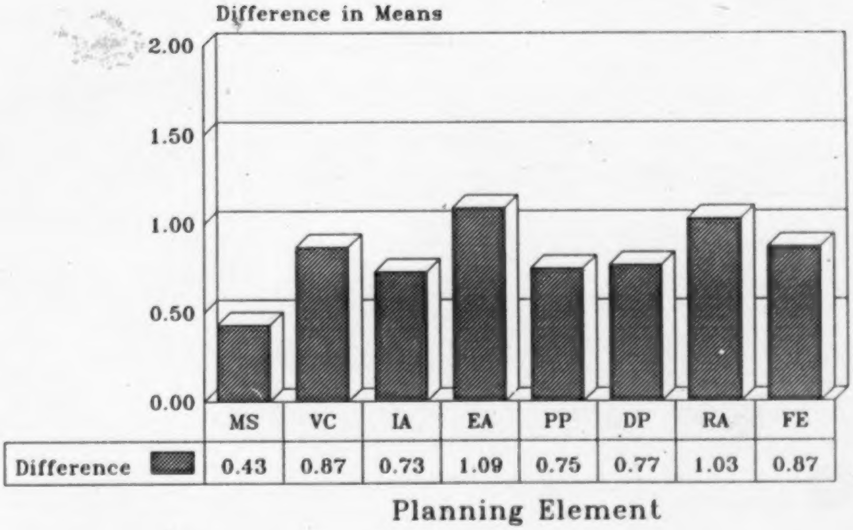
		MS	VC	IA	EA	PP	DP	RA	FE
High	I	4.00	4.00	3.86	3.88	3.57	3.59	3.61	3.69
Low	I	2.98	3.47	3.33	3.45	3.26	3.07	3.40	3.33
Mean Response	°	3.56	3.73	3.65	3.63	3.42	3.40	3.53	3.52

Planning Element

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

Figure 6.2. *A profile of planning under desirable conditions, all colleges*



	MS	VC	IA	EA	PP	DP	RA	FE
Difference ▨	0.43	0.87	0.73	1.09	0.75	0.77	1.03	0.87

Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

Figure 6.3. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, all colleges*

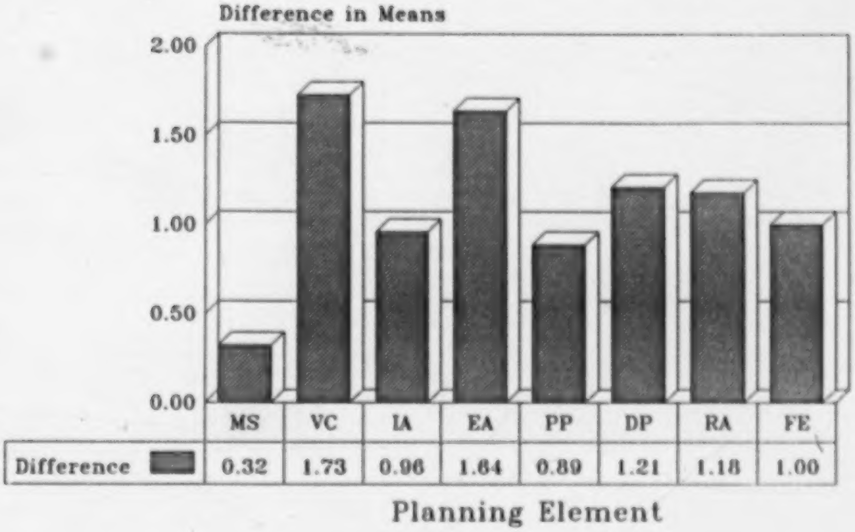
desirable conditions. Participants tended to agree that the planning element requiring the greatest degree of change was that of external assessments (a difference of 1.09 in the means), while the mission statement would require the least amount of enhancement (difference in means = 0.43).

Dissimilar patterns with respect to participants' perceptions of suggested changes in planning elements were evident between colleges. For each college, the planning elements were examined in terms of the difference between the means for agreement under current and desired planning conditions. These profiles are presented in Figures 6.4 to 6.11. The largest single difference was reported in College A for the vision clarification element (difference in means = 1.73, Figure 6.4), while by contrast participants in College E perceived that the importance currently given the vision for the college in planning did not require enhancement (difference in means = -0.01, Figure 6.8).

Planning Indices

The normative model of strategic planning presented earlier (Figure 2.2) was developed to show that planning of this type consisted of two phases--one strategic, the other operational. Further, this model portrayed a number of different individual elements contained in each phase. Total compliance with all the elements of this model would be consistent with "perfect" college planning.

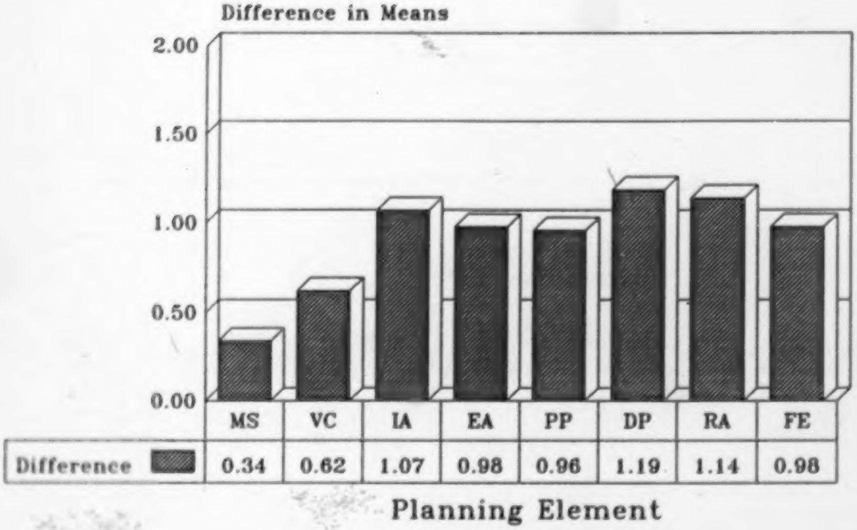
The previous section reviewed for each college the results for elements of planning based on the perceptions of study participants. It was noted that at the elemental level, some components were well developed while others were not.



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

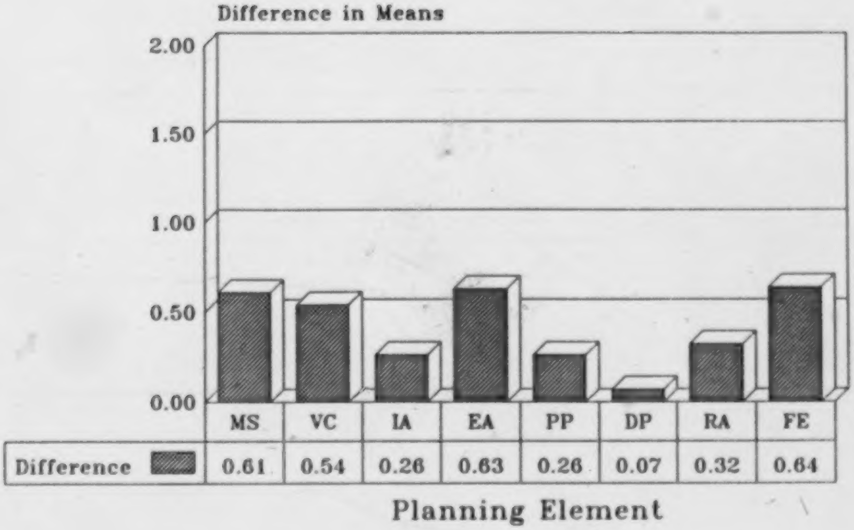
Figure 6.4. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College A*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

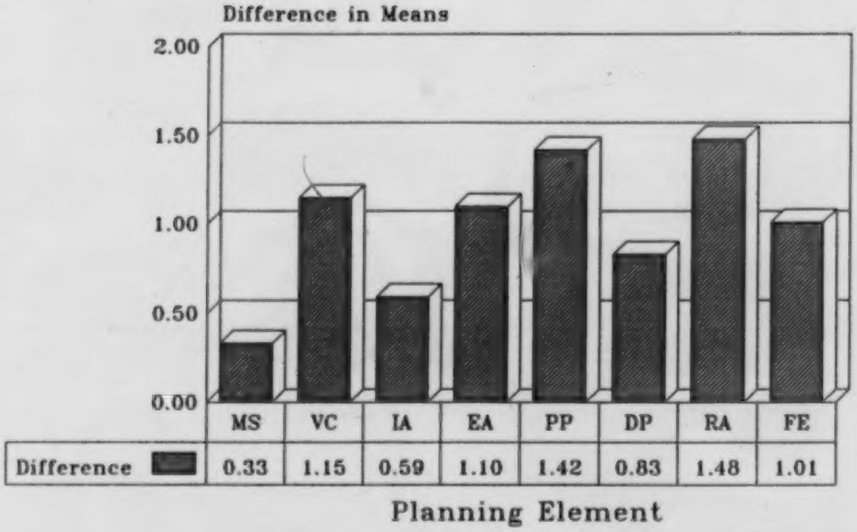
Figure 6.5. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College B*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

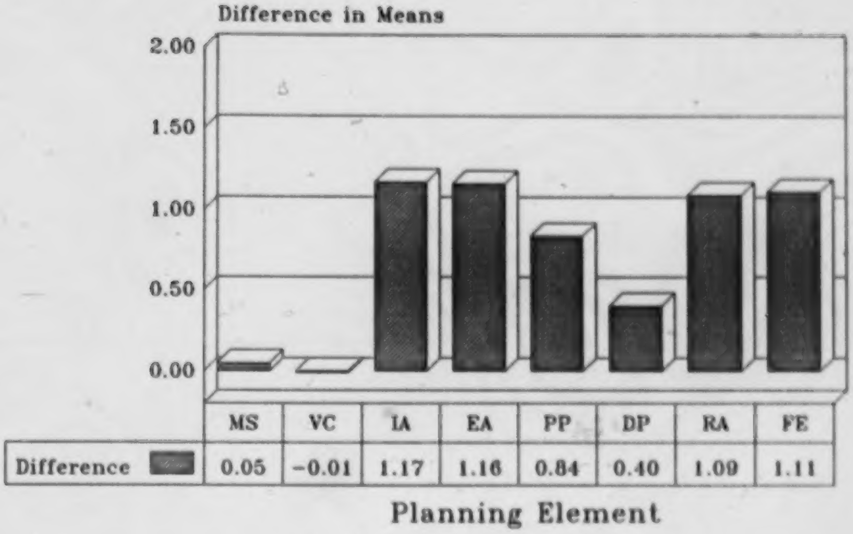
Figure 6.6. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College C*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

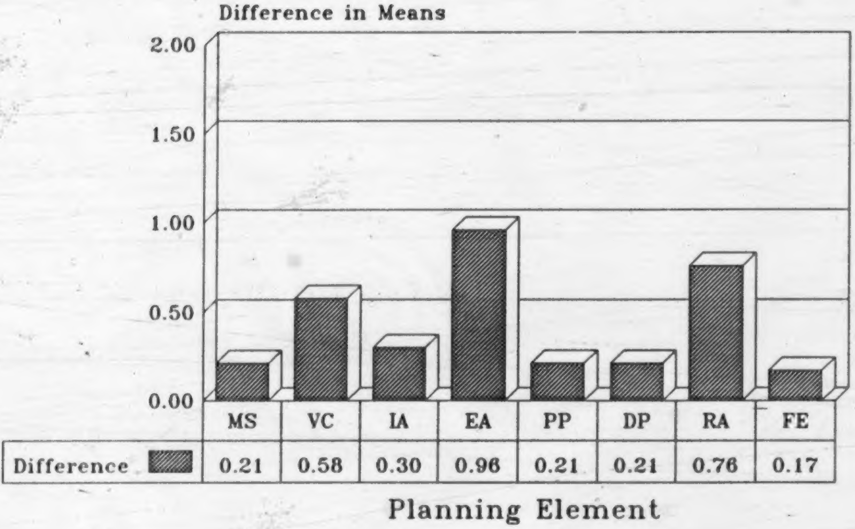
Figure 6.7 *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College D*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

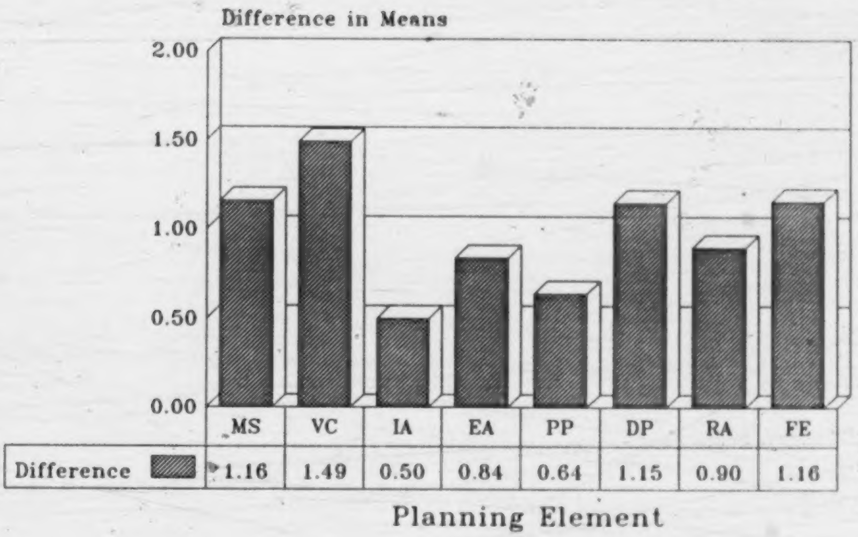
Figure 6.8 *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College E*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

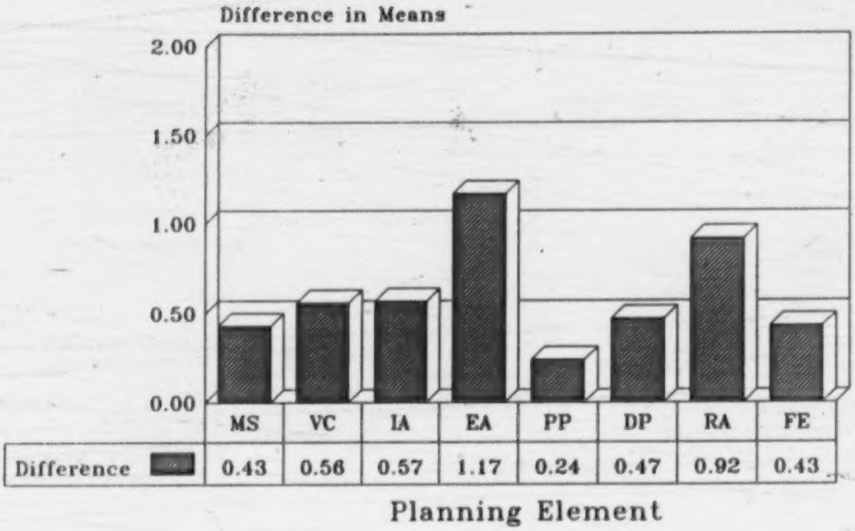
Figure 6.9. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College F*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

Figure 6.10. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College G*



Scale: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=agree; 4=strongly agree.

MS=Mission Statement; VC=Vision Clarification; IA=Internal Assessment; EA=External Assessment; PP=Prioritize Plans; DP=Department Plans; RA=Resource Allocation; FE= Formal Evaluation.

Figure 6.11. *Differences in means for planning under current and desirable conditions, College H*

The extent to which the planning process for each college matched those of the normative model was determined by developing for this study the concept of a *Planning Index*. Since the maximum number of "points" that any one element of the planning process could receive was 4, and since there were five elements in the strategic phase of the process, then the potential number of points attributable to this phase was 20. For the operational phase, the number of planning elements was 3; therefore, the potential number of points for this phase was 12. Overall, the maximum available number of points was 32.

A planning index was developed for each college for the strategic phase, the operational phase, and for the overall planning process. For example, the Planning Index for strategic elements was determined by summing, for each college, the mean response values for the five elements in that phase, dividing that number by 20, and then multiplying by 100. For instance, if the sum of the means for the strategic phase of planning for a college was 14.65, then the corresponding index would be calculated as (14.65/20)x100=73.3. This approach provided a means of combining the responses for each element into some indicator of college planning capacity. These indices were developed for planning under current and desirable conditions.

Planning Indices for Current Planning Conditions

Planning indices for both the strategic and the operational phases were developed, and are presented in this section. Figure 6.12 presents the planning indices for each college (and all colleges) in terms of the strategic phase. For all

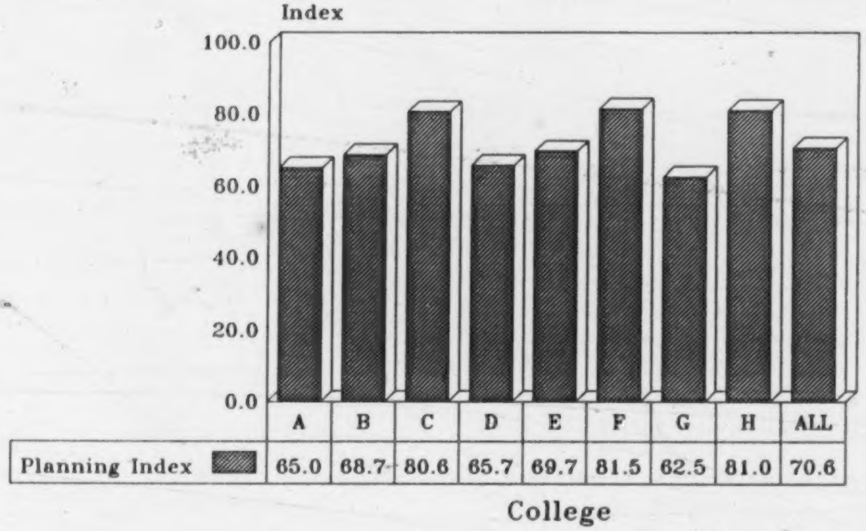


Figure 6.12. *Indices for planning in the strategic phase under current planning conditions, by college*

colleges, the index for this phase of planning was 70.6 with College F having the highest index (81.5) and College G the lowest at 62.5. According to this figure, most colleges were functioning at about 2/3 of their potential in terms of the strategic phase of college planning.

A planning index was also prepared for the operational phase of planning in colleges. It is presented in Figure 6.13. According to this figure, for all colleges, the index for this phase of planning was 64.8 (somewhat less than that for the strategic phase). Most colleges were at less than 2/3 of their potential in this phase. The college with the highest index for this phase was College F (77.7), while College B had the lowest index (58.4).

The final indicator of the calibre of planning under current conditions was the overall college planning index. Since five of the eight elements relate to the strategic phase, the overall planning index is weighted more heavily in terms of this phase. This index was a composite of all (eight) elements found in college planning processes. The results of this analysis are found in Figure 6.14. It can be observed that, for all colleges in this study, the overall planning index was 68.4. The college with the highest overall planning index was College F (80.1), while the lowest index was for College G (61.2). There was a range of 18.9 index points from the college with the highest index to the one with the lowest.

Planning Indices for Desirable Planning Conditions

In this study, participants were asked about the kinds of planning activities that they perceived would be found in planning processes that were more desirable

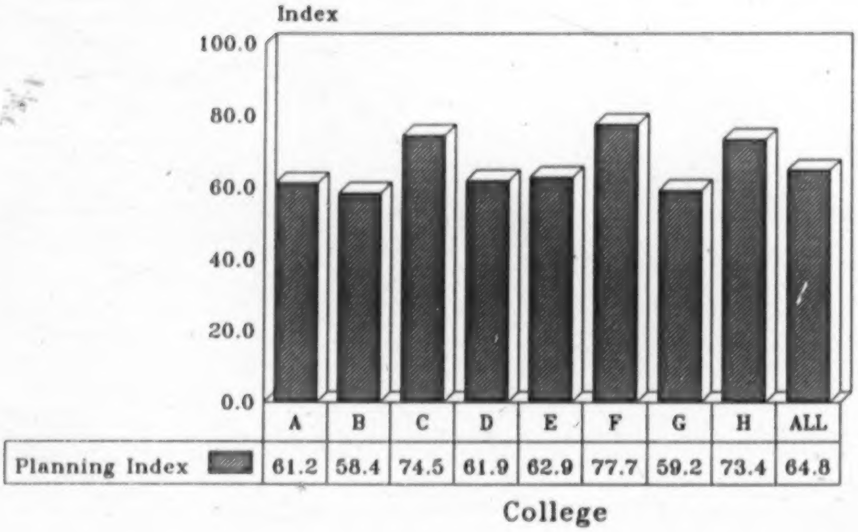


Figure 6.13. *Indices for planning in the operational phase under current planning conditions, by college*

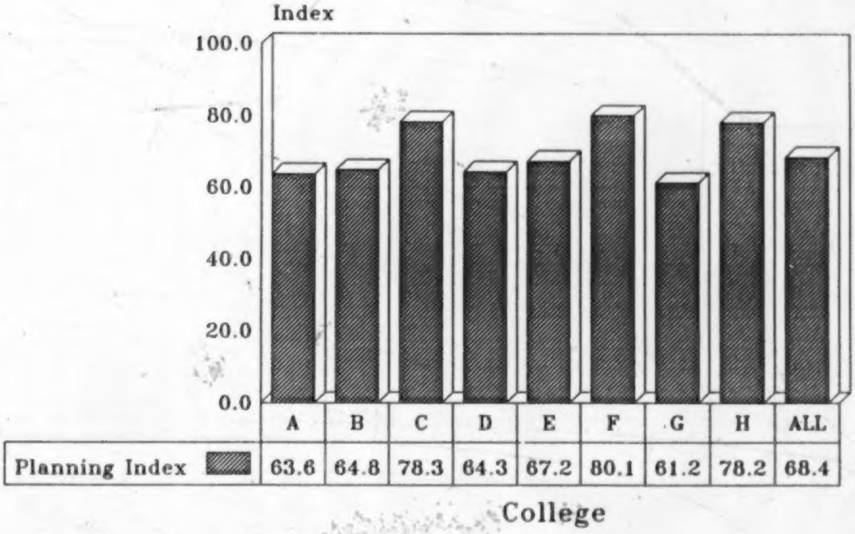
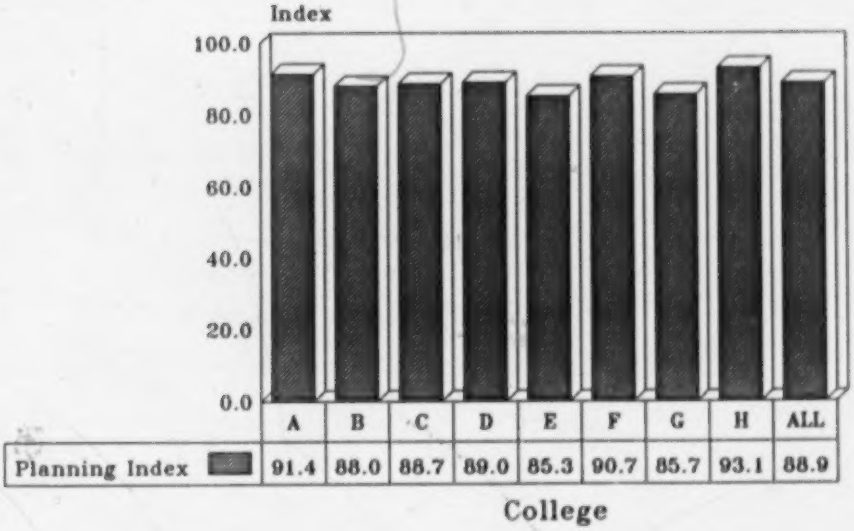


Figure 6.14. *Indices for overall planning under current planning conditions, by college*

than those currently utilized. For each college, these responses were combined to indicate a composite picture. Figure 6.15 presents the results of this analysis. It appears from this figure that for all colleges, the planning index under desirable conditions was 88.9, while it is 68.4 under current conditions (Figure 6.14). Across all colleges, this suggests an increase of 20.5 index points in order for planning processes to be what the participants perceived they should be. Under desirable conditions, the range of indices was small, from a low of 85.3 to a high of 93.1 (a range of 7.8), while this range was 18.9 under current planning conditions. There was much more agreement over those elements of planning that participants would like to see in institutional processes than there was regarding the current state of affairs.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to synthesize the study results into a composite view of planning for the public college sector of the postsecondary educational system in Alberta. Profiles of planning under current and desirable conditions were developed in this chapter. It was noted that, under current conditions, the planning element with the highest level of agreement among participants that it was central to the planning process was that of the mission statement, while the element with the lowest level of agreement was that of resource allocation. When compared with current planning processes, the element of planning which would require the greatest degree of enhancement under desirable planning conditions was that of external assessments.



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	ALL
Planning Index ▨	91.4	88.0	88.7	89.0	85.3	90.7	85.7	93.1	88.9

Figure 6.15. *Indices for overall planning under desirable planning conditions, by college*

A system of planning indices was developed in this chapter. The index showed, for each college, the extent to which participants perceived that the planning process reached its potential level. Indices were prepared for both the strategic and operational phases for each college as well as for the planning process as a whole. This allowed for a macro-view of planning in colleges and for a comparison of the calibre of planning among and between institutions. Current overall indices ranged from a low of 61.2 to a high of 80.1 (out of 100). The planning index for all colleges in the study was 68.4. It was suggested that the strategic phase of college planning was more highly developed than the operational phase, and that in general public colleges in Alberta tended to plan at about 2/3 of their potential. Knowledge of these elements and of the other issues addressed in this chapter should prompt interest with respect to college planning from the point of view of practitioners and researchers alike.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter provides a summary of the purpose and design of the study, presents conclusions from the findings, and outlines a number of implications. The findings of this study are presented against the backdrop of relevant literature. The implications relate to practice, theory, and further research.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to examine the long-term planning processes of public colleges in Alberta and to relate those processes to a normative model of strategic planning developed from the literature. In order to guide this investigation, this general research question was developed:

> *Under conditions of change in the internal and external environments of colleges, what planning efforts are being undertaken, what characteristics of effective planning are evident, and how might planning in colleges be improved?*

In addition, a number of specific research questions were prepared after surveying the literature. This survey suggested that planning in postsecondary education had two major themes. One theme that emerged was that the institutional attitude toward planning as an activity could be viewed as overshadowing the planning processes. Factors such as the level of participation, the political nature of planning, and the structures used for planning purposes were seen to be important variables. The term **context of planning** was coined in this study to refer to this concept. Five specific research questions were developed to guide the information-gathering process for this area.

The other major theme that arose from the literature related to the **process of planning**. In this study, the process of planning was segregated into two components. One component was termed the **strategic phase** wherein the outcome was seen to be a set of prioritized, long-range plans based on matching the college's strengths with opportunities observed in the external environment, and consistent with the mission and vision of the college. The other component of planning was the **operational phase** for which the outcomes of the strategic phase were made functional by the preparation of department-level plans, and the allocation of resources to these plans. As well, a formal evaluation mechanism formed part of the operational phase. The eight questions which related to planning processes were based on the elements of planning found in the literature. Five of these related to the strategic phase and three related to the operational phase. The specific research questions for both the context of planning and the process of planning are presented here.

The Context of Planning

These specific research questions related to the context of planning were prepared:

1. What factors, internal and external to the college, motivate planning?
2. What effect does the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process have on college planning activities?

3. To what extent are college planning activities political in nature?

4. What structure is used to facilitate college planning? To what extent does the President lead the process?

5. To what extent are college planning processes participative? To what extent do participants receive feedback with respect to their contributions to the planning process?

The Process of Planning: The Strategic Phase

Five specific research questions were developed to solicit information with respect to the strategic phase of planning in public colleges in Alberta. The questions related to this were:

6. To what extent is the college mission statement an integral part of the planning process?

7. Is a clear and articulated vision of what the college is to become central to college planning?

8. To what extent and in what ways are internal factors assessed as part of college planning activities?

9. To what extent and in what ways are factors external to the college assessed as part of college planning activities?

10. Do planning processes include efforts aimed at prioritizing alternative strategies?

The Process of Planning: The Operational Phase

Three specific research questions in this study were designed to solicit information from participants with respect to the operational phase of planning in their college. These questions were:

11. Do colleges include department-level plans in attempts to operationalize their planning processes?

12. To what extent are resource allocation decisions an integral part of college

planning?

13. To what extent do colleges engage in processes of evaluation after plans have been implemented?

Participants' Overall Perceptions of Planning

In the interview phase of this study, participants were encouraged to provide their insights regarding the strengths and weaknesses of, and required improvements to current planning processes. This question was phrased as:

14. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of current planning practices? What improvements are recommended?

Design of the Study

This study used a multi-case approach to examine the planning processes of eight public colleges in Alberta. In order to obtain information with respect to these processes, a questionnaire was designed along with an interview guide. The focus of the questionnaire was a series of statements related to planning processes. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that these statements reflected current planning practices. Participants were also asked to indicate, for the same set of statements, the extent to which they agreed that they would reflect planning under desirable conditions. In total, 57 senior administrators at these colleges were involved in the study. Each completed the questionnaire and participated in a follow-up, structured interview. Those involved in the study were presidents, vice-presidents, deans, directors, and registrars. In addition to obtaining information with respect to the planning processes from direct contact with participants, the researcher examined relevant planning documents from each college. It was found, however, that these documents provided little insight in terms of the processes that lead to their development. In addition, views and perspectives of three senior officials from the Alberta Department of Advanced Education were obtained by personal interview and incorporated into the study.

A number of steps were taken to ensure that the results were reliable, valid, and trustworthy. A pilot study was conducted that involved both the questionnaire and the interview instrument. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed, and a summary of each interview was sent to the respective participant for verification. Two colleagues of the researcher acted as independent judges and scored a random sample of interviews. The results of these efforts were correlated with those of the researcher. In the design of the study, the recommendations of the supervisory committee were heeded. The results of the study were presented through the use descriptive summaries, frequency distributions, comparisons of means, and correlations.

Findings of the Study

The major findings are summarized here as they relate to the research questions that formed the basis of this study. The findings for the context of planning and for the process of planning (for both the strategic and operational phases) are presented separately.

The Context of Planning

1. *What factors, internal and external to the college, motivate planning?*

When asked to indicate which factor(s) motivated the college to engage in long-term planning, most participants reported that the factors were primarily internal. Most viewed planning to be an ongoing activity frequently associated with the priorities of senior officials. External forces were perceived to play a minor role in prompting colleges to plan, although the influence of the government's budgeting process--in essence an external factor--was perceived to be important.

2. *What effect does the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process have on college planning activities?*

There were four separate findings for this specific research question. First, most respondents agreed that the Alberta Government's policy of annually allocating budgets to postsecondary institutions had a direct effect on planning. Many participants felt that the annual budgeting process constrained long-term planning. The majority indicated that this influence would be decreased if planning processes were under more desirable conditions.

Second, a number of interviewees indicated that those associated with planning at their college had become disenchanted with the planning process since many of the plans remained unfulfilled due to financial constraints.

Third, some participants indicated that, while the budgeting process acted as a constraint to long-term planning, this activity was still a worthwhile exercise. Long term planning helped circumscribe those areas that the college should include, if and when funds became available.

Fourth, suggestions that colleges should become less dependent on government funding were made by a number of study participants. According to them, alternative public and private sources of revenue should be considered.

3. *To what extent are college planning activities political in nature?*

There were three distinct findings for this question. First, it was not clear in this study whether or not planning was a political activity. On the scale that was used for this study, the rating was at the mid-point and comments on both sides of the issue were made. Second, planning was perceived to become somewhat political as the processes increased in specificity. Third, a number of college planning processes included local elected members of the provincial Legislative Assembly. For some participants, this was seen as a political dimension to their planning.

4. *What structure is used to facilitate college planning? To what extent does the President lead the process?*

In the majority of cases, participants in this study indicated that existing committees were used to fulfil the role of coordinating the college planning function. As well, respondents tended to agree that the governing structure of the college facilitated planning, but suggested that under desirable planning conditions, the support of the governing structure would be enhanced. In nearly all colleges in the study, the president played a lead role in the planning process.

5. *To what extent are college planning processes participative? To what extent do participants receive feedback with respect to their contributions to the planning process?*

This specific research question had two parts and therefore two different findings. In most cases, participants reported that the planning processes in colleges were participative. These processes tended to involve all internal constituents, and in most cases, external Program Advisory Committees. Some colleges also involved the community at large in their planning process. Participants indicated that under more desirable conditions, the level of participation would be enhanced.

Second, some concern was expressed with respect to feedback to those who participated in the planning process. Indications were that a failure to inform participants regarding the extent to which their input was incorporated into the plans resulted in frustration for those individuals.

The Process of Planning: The Strategic Phase

6. *To what extent is the college mission statement an integral part of the planning process?*

Participants tended to agree that under current conditions, the mission statement was integral to the planning process. Under desirable planning conditions, the role that the mission statement would play would increase significantly.

A number of respondents indicated that the mission statements currently in place were very general in nature so that almost any programming proposal could be incorporated into the college. These respondents suggested that the generality of the mission statement provided little guidance in terms of making decisions about program/budget priorities.

7. *Is a clear and articulated vision of what the college is to become central to college planning?*

Most of the respondents reported that there was a clear and articulated vision of the college and its future. However, that the level of agreement with the statement was not as high as that for the mission statement. Under desirable planning conditions, participants would elevate the significance of the vision to levels higher than that of the mission statement.

8. *To what extent and in what ways are internal factors assessed as part of college planning activities?*

Participants tended to agree that the degree of assessment of internal strengths and weaknesses in public colleges was acceptable although there were variances of opinion. Many would enhance this planning element given more desirable processes.

The predominant strength of colleges reported by participants was the positive relationships with the communities that they served. A number of respondents indicated that colleges lacked the capacity and/or propensity to assess their weaknesses.

Colleges tended to rely on qualitative data in planning processes as opposed to quantitative data and were inclined to make plans without thorough analysis of all relevant factors.

9. *To what extent and in what ways are factors external to the college assessed as part of college planning activities?*

Participants reported concern over the lack of formal environmental scanning activities and mechanisms. These activities would be significantly enhanced under desirable forms of planning. Under desirable planning conditions, competing institutions would be monitored much more rigorously than is the case presently.

New programming initiatives were not, in general, a reaction or response to external factors in this study. According to study participants, colleges administrators did not appear to actively pursue new opportunities that had been identified. This conditions would change under desirable planning conditions.

10. *Do planning processes include efforts aimed at prioritizing alternative strategies?*

Using current planning processes, colleges do not actively prioritize alternative strategic options that have been identified. Participants suggested that this element of planning would be enhanced if desirable planning processes were utilized.

The Process of Planning: The Operational Phase

11. *Do colleges include department-level plans in attempts to operationalize their planning processes?*

Under current planning conditions, participants did not agree that department/unit-level plans were tied to college-level plans. This area was identified as one that would be enhanced under desirable planning processes.

Participants suggested that colleges lacked a planning process that incorporated both formulation and implementation elements. This would improve under desirable planning schemes.

12. To what extent are resource allocation decisions an integral part of college planning?

The allocation of resources to plans and priorities identified through strategic planning was another area of concern expressed by participants in this study. A number of them suggested that the planning process disintegrated at the point of supporting identified initiatives with resources.

13. To what extent do colleges engage in processes of evaluation after plans have been implemented?

For the most part, participants reported that colleges do not have formal evaluation procedures in terms of monitoring the outcomes of the planning process. A significant improvement in this area would be realized under desirable planning conditions.

Participants' Overall Perceptions of Planning

14. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of current planning practices? What improvements are recommended?

The sole strength of the planning processes identified by participants in this study was the enhancement of collegiality. The participative dimensions of the planning activities tended to "draw people together."

In terms of the weaknesses of college planning processes, participants suggested that there was a tendency for planning to get "bogged down in collegiality." This is an interesting outcome of the single strength of college planning. A further weakness of planning was that the outcomes of planning efforts were not obvious--causing some individuals to become disenchanted with the process.

The primary recommendations for the improvement of planning were that the processes be clear and well-articulated, that more resources be devoted to this effort, that senior management present an overt commitment to planning, and that the level of participation be raised.

Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this section is to bring closure. That is, it relates the findings of the study to the literature. The format of this section follows that which has been outlined previously--conclusions regarding the context of planning are presented first, followed by a discussion of the process of planning. The questions that formed the basis of the structured interview and the questionnaire were, to a large extent, based on a three-phase study of strategic planning in colleges and universities in the United States. Three reports were prepared for that study--Meredith (1985), Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987), and Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1988). Where applicable, the results of this three-phase study are compared to those of the present study.

The Context of Planning

The concept of the planning context was developed in this study to refer to those factors which tend to overshadow the processes of planning in colleges (see Figure 2.1). In this study, the context of planning related to the factors which motivate colleges to engage in long-term planning, the influence of the government's annual budgeting process on planning activities, the participative and political dimensions of planning, and the committee structure utilized to conduct the planning activities.

The impetus for planning. Planning is generally seen as a response to changes in internal and external factors that have been identified by formal scanning activities (Keller, 1983; Heydinger, 1985; Chaffee, 1989). In a study in American colleges, both Freed (1986) and Larson (1987) found that declining resources and a need to determine the colleges' direction and priorities were the prime motivators for planning. The need to set priorities, direction, purpose, and to focus effort was the prime motivating factor for conducting strategic planning according to Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1988). Wang (1991, p. 194) found that the need expressed by faculty to "determine its own priorities and direction and position itself appropriately" was a major impetus for a Canadian university faculty to engage in a strategic planning exercise.

In this study, the most frequently mentioned reason for planning was really not a reason at all. The majority of participants indicated that some form of planning had always been conducted and that it was part of an ongoing cycle. Even the second most frequently mentioned "reason" for planning (senior officials' commitment to planning) did not correspond to what one would expect in response to a question related to the reasons for conducting long-range planning. A possible explanation for this could be respondents' familiarity and fixation with the annual budgeting cycle. To them, budgeting embodied the formal planning activities for the college. To this extent, the findings of this study do not support other research.

The influence of government's annual budgeting process. The majority of studies conducted on college planning have originated in the United States. In many of these cases, the colleges are private. Meredith (1985) found that public institutions tended to engage to a lesser degree in strategic planning and to be less satisfied with the outcomes than were private institutions. By definition, public colleges are tied to government and its policies regarding the timing and amounts of grants to postsecondary education. When financial resources in public institutions become constrained, they are forced to respond. As Michael (1991) found in his study of marketing practices of postsecondary institutions in Alberta:

> Many strategies have been examined and many more are being examined by the institutions with the intention to either enhance cost-efficiency, generate funds to replace government grants, or simply to cope with these hard times. Many of the post-secondary educational institutions in the province tended to be reactive rather than proactive in dealing with budget constraints. (p. 243)

In this study, the influence of the government's annual budgeting practices appeared to have a definite effect on the planning activities in colleges. Some participants suggested that planning efforts were constrained because the amount of capital available was essentially fixed (or declining in real terms) and that the kinds of changes in direction that could be anticipated were minor. For some, however, it was reassuring to have grants that did not take wild quantitative swings. Many suggested that if colleges were to respond to the changing needs of the community, alternative sources of funding would have to be explored.

Suggestions ranged from forming closer ties with business and industry, to increasing the proportion of the educational burden that is borne by students. Participants suggested that if college planning processes followed desirable patterns, the influence of government budget allocations would be lessened. The findings of this study tend to support those of the literature cited here.

The political nature of planning. Benveniste (1989) suggested that planning involves the act of change, of working through others to achieve results. The process of planning is characterized by elements of politics. According to Schmidtlein and Milton (1989, p. 13) "planning was seen as a way to overcome the effects of individuals and units pursuing their own 'turfs'." Meredith (1985, p. 36) found that "vested interests, hidden agendas, and territorial situations" were a concern to participants. Schmidtlein (1990) stated that "The consensus represented by any plan or budget does not imply a moratorium on the political activities of participants who sought different visions of the future" (p. 15). Holdaway and Meekison (1990, p. 133) recommended that, in planning, special attention be given to the "political realities of university life." In general, this study did not conclude whether or not planning was a highly political activity. Although there were some differences among colleges in this respect, it was found that as the planning process reached the prioritizing and budget allocation stages, it tended to become more political. A direct relationship between the level of specificity in planning and the political nature of the activity appeared to exist. As Schmidtlein observed, "the more specific a plan becomes, the more likely it will generate political conflict" (p. 16). The findings of the current study would tend to support this point of view.

Structural dimensions of planning. Most research reports of planning in colleges and universities indicate that specifically mandated, ad hoc planning committees carry out the planning function (Hobbs, 1986; Freed, 1987; Petrello, 1987). On balance, Schmidtlein and Milton (1989) found in a study of planning in U. S. colleges and universities that "In general, interviewees judged planning processes that were integrated with normal campus decision processes to be more satisfactory than those using broadly based committees and operating apart from traditional decision makers and governance bodies" (p. 9). In this study, the majority of colleges relied on existing administrative committees for planning which was somewhat at odds with most of the literature on this topic.

The role of the president or senior academic officer in the planning process is seen as crucial (Jones, 1990). Petrello (1987) reported that in a survey of 100 U. S. colleges and universities, the president in 43% of the cases lead the planning process. The vice-president (academic) was leader in 20% of the respondent institutions. According to Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1988), the most important "secret of success" was having CEO and administrative commitment. In a study by Freed (1987) in 133 respondent U.S. colleges, 91% of the presidents spent either "some" or "great" amounts of time in formal strategic planning activities. In this study, the president was seen as the leader of the planning process in seven of the eight colleges. In addition, the governing structure of the colleges in this study tended to facilitate planning efforts. For the majority of colleges in this study, the findings from the literature compare favorably with their experience in this dimension of planning.

The participative nature of planning. Normative models of strategic planning suggest a high level of participation (Keller, 1983; Petrello, 1986; Robertson-Smith, 1987; Cope, 1989). Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1988) found that getting involvement, support, and cooperation was one of the major problems encountered by institutions engaged in bona fide strategic planning, while in the same study it was suggested that planning was best accomplished when high levels of faculty involvement were evident. Freed (1987) found that the most frequently mentioned planning committee composition was that of administration and faculty. From a slightly different perspective, Hobbs (1986) found that the mean size of planning committees in 197 American two-year colleges was 18 with about one-third of the representation from the faculty.

Participants in this study tended to agree that planning processes were participative. The planning activities generally included all internal constituent groups. There was agreement that under desirable planning conditions, the level of participation would be increased. The current participative nature of planning appears to be consistent with the findings of other studies cited here.

The Process of Planning: The Strategic Phase

The role of the college mission statement. The mission statement should be the basis of planning in postsecondary institutions (Cope, 1981; Robertson-Smith, 1987). Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987) found that the mission statement played an important role in the planning processes of the colleges and universities in their study. Other research has found that nearly all strategic planning exercises contain an examination and clarification of the mission statement (Freed, 1987).

The content and utility of the mission statement is a separate issue. In a study of the role of mission statements in 114 U.S. postsecondary educational institutions, Newsom and Hayes (1991) reported that ". . . most of the mission statements are vague, evasive, or rhetorical, lacking specificity or clear purposes" (p. 29). They also concluded:

> We found that when we hid the institution's name, most of the colleges or universities could not be identified from their statements because they all read alike, full of honorable verbiage, signifying nothing. Not surprisingly, few colleges find much use for their mission statements. They are usually not guidelines for serious planning. (p. 29)

The conclusions of Newsom and Hayes (1991) were supported by the findings of this study. While for the majority of respondents, the mission statement was viewed as playing an important role in planning--of all the eight elements of planning, the mission statement received the highest level of agreement among participants with respect to its presence in planning processes--a number of participants expressed concern that the mission statement for their college was so broad and vague that nearly any educational endeavour would qualify. They suggested that it was of little value in assisting the college to make the "tough," selective program decisions.

The centrality of a clear and well-articulated vision. According to a number of authors, a clear vision of what the college is to become should be central to planning (Keller, 1983; Cope, 1987). In the study conducted by Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987), it was found that the vision for the institution and its usage in bona fide planning was an element that was perceived as being very important. That finding was supported in this study. Participants tended to agree that under present planning conditions there was a clear and well-articulated vision for the college. However, when asked to indicate their perception regarding the vision under desirable planning schemes, participants indicated that it should play a more important role.

The assessment of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Bryson (1989) indicated that the assessment of a college's strengths and weaknesses was not an easy task. He suggested that data-gathering mechanisms were not fully developed in most postsecondary institutions and that they might have to settle for qualitative estimates of internal factors. In a U.S. study of planning in colleges and universities, Schmidtlein and Milton (1989) found that of sixteen campuses that they visited, only five had reliable data on their external environment and their internal operations.

The results of this study generally support the results of those above. Respondents indicated that they lacked the support facilities for rigorous data-gathering and analysis, but reported definite agreement that this activity should be enhanced. It appeared in this study that the prime sources of data regarding colleges' strengths and weaknesses were qualitative in nature. Four of the eight colleges in this study had individuals whose responsibilities included "institutional research."

The assessment of external opportunities and threats. One of the major elements which distinguishes strategic planning from other forms of planning is its emphasis on an external orientation (Meredith, Cope, and Lenning, 1987). Environmental scanning is the focus of a number of articles related to normative models of strategic planning in postsecondary education (Glover and Holmes, 1983; Jonsen, 1986; Morrison and Held, 1988). All of these authors reinforce the importance of a formal system of assessing factors external to the college in order to be alert to potential opportunities and threats. In this study, this element of the planning process of public colleges was reported to be one of the least developed and requiring the most improvement. Participants cited a lack of time and resources as contributing factors. The findings of this study, when related to the literature, suggest that the assessment of external opportunities and threats falls short of that proposed by others.

The prioritizing of alternative strategic options. The final element in the strategic phase of long-term planning is that of prioritizing the various combinations of plans that have been identified. Fiscal realities are such that not all plans can be funded; therefore, a set of priorities must be developed. Peterson (1980) suggested that the setting of priorities was a necessary step, connecting the strategic phase of planning to the operational one. This element of planning in colleges and universities has been characterized as one having heightened political overtones (Meredith, Cope, and Lenning, 1988). Participants in this study tended to agree that the planning processes currently utilized in colleges required attention with respect to priority-setting. Under desirable conditions, the prioritizing of alternative options would enhanced. In relation to the literature cited, the findings of this current study suggest that improvements are required.

The Process of Planning: The Operational Phase

The development of department-level plans. In order to make strategic plans functional, the college-wide plans must be converted to department/unit-level plans (Peterson, 1980; Cope, 1987; Lang, 1988). This process makes someone or some unit responsible for the outcome. In a study of two-year colleges in the United States, Hobbs (1986) found that approximately 88% of them indicated that annual, department-level plans were formed. Boxx and Johnson (1980) found that two-thirds of the institutions studied prepared department-level plans. In the study by Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987), the preparation of department-level plans that were integrated with college-wide plans was an important facet of bona fide strategic planning. In this study, participants did not agree that the element related to the preparation of department-level plans was a central, well-developed planning component. Participants suggested that there was much room for improvement here. These findings do not support those of the studies cited here.

Allocating resources to department-level plans. According to Lang (1989), a significant but sometimes difficult step in the planning process in colleges and universities is linking budgets to plans. Gates and Brown (1988) proposed that linking planning and budgeting may be more onerous task than developing either process independently. The reason they gave for this difficulty was that "the two activities have evolved through different process orientations--planning through a collegial process based on consensus, and budgeting through a bureaucratic process based on quantitative goals" (p. 54). Meisinger (1990) cited a number of obstacles related to linking planning to budgeting:

> Changes in budgets generally occur only at the margin. The largest part (up to 80%) of an institution's budget is comprised of salaries. . . . Planning can and should range broadly in its review of future directions, but to be compatible with budgeting it should reflect the realities of implementation: namely, that the magnitude of change is determined by the size of the margin. (p. 14)

In this study, the allocation of resources to plans was reported to be a weak element in the process--not unlike the difficulties cited in the literature. Respondents indicated that more would have to be accomplished in this area. Many found planning and budgeting "at the margin" problematic. As a result, the findings of this study are in concert with those cited here.

Formal evaluation mechanisms. According to Boxx and Johnson (1980, p. 37), "development of an effective system of evaluation within an institution is an important undertaking, totally on par with other management functions. Evaluation provides a means for measuring success and for defining the points for management action." In their study, they found that 57% of the institutions utilized a formal evaluation mechanism. Hobbs (1986) indicated that 82% of respondent colleges formally evaluated the outcomes of plans. A formal review program was found to be important in the study conducted by Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1987).

In this study, formal evaluation mechanisms were not reported to be characteristic of most of the current planning process of the public colleges in Alberta. This was an area requiring improvement, according to study participants. These findings do not appear to support those of other studies reported here.

Participants' Overall Perceptions of Planning

In the final (third) phase of a study of planning in colleges and universities in the United States, Meredith, Cope, and Lenning (1988) asked participants to indicate the secrets of success with strategic planning as well as those activities and approaches that should be avoided. It was suggested that the key ingredients for success related to (in ranked order) "having CEO and administrative commitment, involving the faculty, having a well-defined process, communicating continually, having good information, and ensuring that the process is ongoing" (p. 8). Problematic factors were associated with achieving involvement and cooperation, the amount of time required, getting started, developing consensus, and instilling too high expectations. It was found in this study that the prime benefit related to the enhancement of collegiality, while the weaknesses were that the planning process tended to get "bogged down" in that collegiality, people's expectations were raised too high, and that the process itself was unclear. Participants suggested that in order for planning to be more effective, the process should be made more clear and formal, more resources should be devoted to planning, there should be an overt commitment to planning, and that the level of participation should be increased. These findings appear to be consistent with those of other research on this topic.

A Summative View of College Planning

The college planning processes in this study were examined in relation to a normative model of strategic planning. Cope (1987) and Bryson (1989) provided much of the information with respect to the design of the model, while Shirley (1987) presented criteria against which planning could be judged, and Jones (1990) suggested reasons for the failure of planning efforts. These and other models/approaches/criteria formed the basis of examining the planning processes of the colleges in this study.

The normative strategic planning model which was used as a yardstick to measure the planning processes in this study could be viewed as rational/positivistic in orientation. It was found in this study that of all the elements in the normative model, only the element related to the review and clarification of the mission statement was well developed and incorporated into the colleges' planning processes. All others were in need of varying degrees of refinement. It was also found in this study that of the two phases in college planning--the strategic phase and the operational phase--the latter phase was in most need of improvement. Colleges had difficulty developing annual department-level plans, linking plans to budgets, and preparing formal evaluation mechanisms.

Shirley (1987) developed a set of criteria against which to compare the process, the data used, and the decisional aspect of planning. Of the five criteria he proposed to evaluate the planning process, there was evidence in this study to support two of them--top management support and constituency involvement--while for the three criteria related to the data used, there was no evidence of compliance in this study. None of the five criteria that Shirley suggested could be used to judge the decisional aspect of planning were met. In relation to the five factors that Jones (1990) indicated as being associated with the failure of strategic planning, four were evident in this study--a lack of training for plan implementation, the trustees [governors] have not placed a stamp of approval on the process, the timetable for achieving results was too long, and there was not a clear planning process. Consequently, the planning processes currently being employed in Alberta's public colleges were found to be lacking in a number of important areas as prescribed by the normative (rationalistic) model of planning outlined earlier. They would appear to be more incremental in nature. Under more desirable planning conditions, the processes would move closer to the strategic planning approach. Similarly, Wang (1991) found that "The model followed by this Project [the one he researched] can be perceived as a traditional planning model because of its internal focus, inadequate environmental scan, and a lack of identification of strategic issues" (p. 209).

This study also examined some elements of the planning environment of colleges. Study participants suggested that while the level of participation was adequate, it should be improved. Planning proved not to be highly political due in part to the fact that most of the planning occurred at the macro-level and lacked the specificity typical of highly political planning processes. Planning was viewed as less important possibly because the vast majority of funding was public, and only marginal changes could be anticipated and planned for. Significant changes in direction would likely result from colleges' finding additional, alternative sources of funds separate from those provided by traditional ones.

Implications for Practice

As a result of this study, a number of findings have implications for college administrators who wish to respond to the turbulent internal and external factors that plague postsecondary institutions today. The model used in this study as a basis for evaluating the planning processes of colleges was a rational, strategic planning one. For this approach to have utility, a number of factors must be considered. These are developed here.

Leadership and Commitment

One theme that was observed throughout this study was that the president and significant others must make overt, ongoing commitments to the act of college planning. This would require that they first gain a clear understanding of the models of effective planning and then carefully develop a process specifically for their institution. An integral part of the development should a careful articulation of this process to all constituents, inclusive of timelines and responsibilities. A system of update reports should be built into the scheme.

The Planning Committee Structure

A second implication for practice that arose from this study relates to structural matters. College planning is best expedited when a specific planning committee is struck, comprised of a cross-section of constituents and linked with decision-making and governing structures of the college. This is in contrast to relying on existing administrative committees with other agendas to guide and coordinate college planning.

Resources Devoted to Planning

The third implication is that if planning is to have utility in colleges, additional resources--both human and capital--must be devoted to this activity. These resources would be utilized for providing information with respect to internal and external factors, as well as developing and maintaining a much needed formal plan evaluation mechanism.

Alternative Funding Sources

A fourth consideration resulting from this study having implication for practice is that, in order for colleges to be able to respond to the changing needs of communities, alternative revenue sources and linkages will have to be developed. Pressures on governments to reduce deficits translate into reductions in real grants over time. The shortfall will have to be made up. Planning, when there is little margin, has been shown in this study to be a frustrating experience, raising the scepticism of participants.

The Cooperation of Planning and Budgeting Personnel

The final recommendation for practice is that those in colleges who plan and those who work with budgets should be encouraged to collaborate. Ultimately, effective planning requires resource allocation/reallocation; the financial departments of colleges should be involved early in the planning cycle. However, senior administrators must be prepared to deal with new political dimensions of planning as the plans and budgets become more closely linked.

Implications for Theory Development

A number of implications for the development of theory in the area of planning in colleges have identified as a result of this study. These are reviewed here.

Planning Paradigms

Schmidtlein (1974) suggested that planning in postsecondary education could be conceptualized as forming a continuum, whereby at one extreme were those approaches which tended to be positivistic (comprehensive/prescriptive) and at the other extreme those which were less rational (incremental/remedial). The alternative planning models proposed by Peterson (1980) followed many of the same dimensions, as did Chaffee's (1984) adaptive and interpretive strategies.

It has been proposed that differences exist between the planning approaches that are espoused and those in use. Schmidtlein (1974) suggested that, although government policy-makers in the educational arena are oriented towards the Comprehensive Prescriptive (C/P) paradigm, the reality of environmental factors and traditional educational values make the Incremental/Remedial (I/R) paradigm more applicable. He went on to state that:

> Consequently, despite the belief in the efficiency of the C/P paradigm and the use of planning rhetoric, a high proportion of decisions in education are made on a disjointed, incremental, remedial basis. A gap thus is visible between the C/P ideology and the I/R practice in education. (p. 11)

In this study, it was found that the planning processes did not conform to those characteristic of rational strategic planning models. It was hypothesized that the public nature of these institutions and the high proportion of 'fixed costs' (wages and salaries) made planning practicable only at the margin and that this margin was shrinking.

These suggestions and findings raise a number of issues that should be considered in terms of planning theory and models as they relate to postsecondary institutions in general, and public colleges in particular. The larger issue is the extent to which rationalistic models form useful criteria with which to evaluate planning in public institutions. Since the tendency is to perceive only limited options available to these organization, planning tends to occur only "at the margin." Planning based on the normative strategic planning model requires a significant resource commitment, and the benefits derived in relation to the (marginal) costs is questionable. A more appropriate use of the full strategic planning model would be to encourage departments and units in postsecondary institutions to view planning as more than an examination for slight adjustments, but rather to be a thorough analysis of all activities. Only those initiatives that clearly comply with the mission of the institution would continue to be funded.

This would make the most effective use of the strategic planning process.

The Strategic Planning Model

This study also raises questions about the strategic planning model itself. Most presentations of the model start with an examination of the institute's mission and end with a mechanism for evaluating the outcomes of the planning process. There could be a tendency for planning to stall at the "mission clarification" step due to the large number of competing interests that must be considered. This step could be divisive and inhibit effective planning. Consideration should be given to starting the process (and presenting the model in the literature) at the point of analyzing the external opportunities and threats, thereby providing a common focus in terms of expanded options, some of which may be based on agreement that an "enemy" exists.

The dynamic and iterative nature of planning implies that models should not be overly structured nor prescriptive. A more dynamic model, illustrative of these qualities, is required. Figure 7.1 is an effort in this regard. The purpose of this figure is to capture a number of realities of planning in colleges; these are discussed here.

The strategic institutional phase. The structure of Figure 7.1 portrays the circular nature of strategic issues and the elements of which they are comprised. As indicated above, for example, the results of internal and external assessments should be evaluated in relation to the mission and vision of the college. As part of the issue identification process, the mission statement is consulted before the

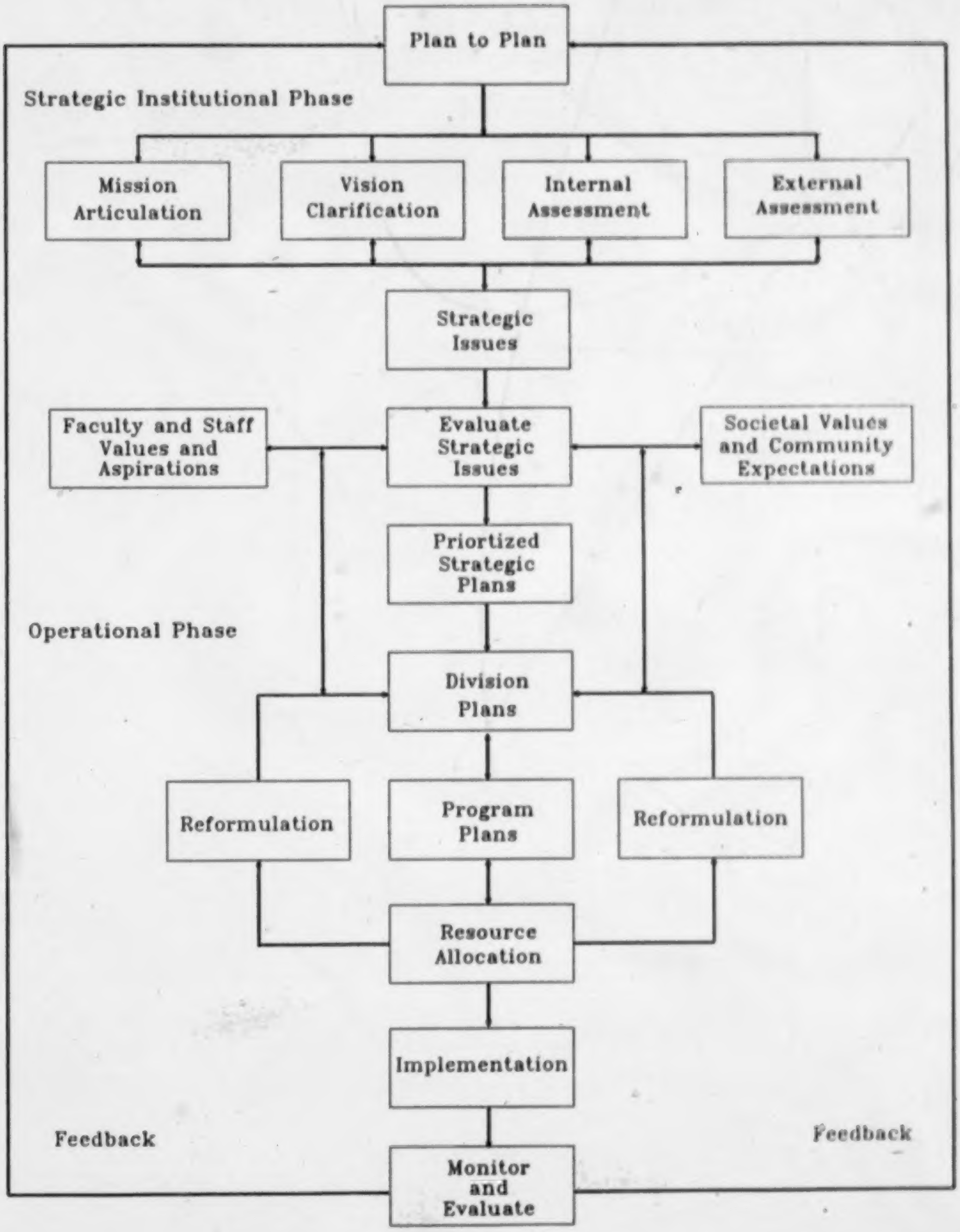

Plan to Plan
Strategic Institutional Phase
Mission Articulation
Vision Clarification
Internal Assessment
External Assessment
Strategic Issues
Faculty and Staff Values and Aspirations
Evaluate Strategic Issues
Societal Values and Community Expectations
Priortized Strategic Plans
Operational Phase
Division Plans
Reformulation
Program Plans
Reformulation
Resource Allocation
Implementation
Feedback
Feedback
Monitor and Evaluate

Figure 7.1. *A dynamic, normative model of strategic planning*

strategic plans are finalized. This model also provides for the influence of the values of internal and external constituents in relation to the selection and setting of strategic plans.

The operational phase. In the operational phase of the planning process, the hierarchical nature of postsecondary institutions is recognized. Strategic institutional plans are generally relayed to larger units ("divisions" in Figure 7.1) which in turn rely upon smaller sub-units (programs) to make the plans operative. At the divisional and program levels, planning has both strategic and operational dimensions. Resource constraints may require that the plans be reformulated before they can be put into action. This reformulation cycle may pass through a number of iterations in the planning process. This dynamic is an important feature of the model outlined in Figure 7.1.

The Context of Planning

Models of planning for colleges should address the issue of the context of planning. The extent to which colleges engage in any formal planning activities would appear in part to be a function of the planning mentality of the senior officials. Most models related to planning in these types of organizations focus their attention on the planning process to the exclusion of the larger contextual issue. It was noted in this study, for example, that while planning was seen as an ongoing activity it was fraught with difficulties. A clear understanding of effective planning processes would enhance the ability of colleges to be proactive in their response to internal and internal forces. This clarity would be further improved if the context of planning were understood.

Implications for Further Research

A number of areas requiring further examination have been uncovered as a result of this study. These are presented here in the form of questions for consideration. These could form the basis of research questions for further study.

College Planning Processes in Canada

Very little has been written with respect to planning processes in colleges in Canada. Sibley (1986) asserted that, because of the public nature of postsecondary education in Canada, institutions will be kept alive. If this is the case, what are the implications for planning? What influence do the reduced real levels of support have on planning? Planning with very little room to manoeuvre is becoming more difficult. What is the state of system rationalization in Canada? How does this relate to planning at the college level?

The Context of Planning

In this study, the phrase "context of planning" was used to refer to the planning environment of a college, relating specifically to factors such as the levels of participation, the form of planning structures, and the political nature of the planning activities themselves. This concept was seen as an important over-arching one, influencing the type and timing of all forms of planning in colleges. Additional research should be focused on the role that the context of planning plays in relation to processes of planning. Are there factors in this context associated with effective planning outcomes? What are they, and is there some predictive value in the association?

The Process of Planning

A number of elements from normative models of strategic planning were found in this study to be ineffectual. They require additional study. In particular, how can the mission statement be drawn so that it is specific enough to provide meaningful direction, but broad enough to encourage growth and diversity? In reference to the vision for the college, what are the most effective venues for its development and articulation? Precisely, what are the information requirements and how can colleges organize for effective information-gathering with respect to internal and external assessments? Regarding the annual budgeting processes of governments, how can public colleges move away from reliance on the budgeting cycle as the driving force for planning? And, how might evaluation mechanisms be developed so that they become automatic and iterative and mesh with the short and long term planning processes? The planning process outlined in Figure 7.1 should be tested in further research.

Planning Models

For this study, a number of planning models and approaches were explored (Schmidtlein, 1974; Peterson, 1980; Chaffee, 1984). It appeared from this examination that the preferred models of planning were rational in orientation. Given this, what planning approaches are most effective for publicly funded institutions with shrinking real revenues. Would additional funding alternatives imply that rational, strategic planning would have application? Under current conditions, is incremental planning all that can be hoped for?

Personal Reflections

The last word in this study is left for the researcher to share personal insights gained as a result of involvement with this study. The researcher cannot remain unaffected by the process of conducting studies of this type. Unexpected occurrences happened along the way and must be reported for the enlightenment of those who choose to go this way at a later time. Although it was the intention at the outset of this study to rely to some extent on planning documents for information regarding college planning processes, they did not prove to be useful. The planning documents, in most cases, did not reveal the process that had been used in their preparation. This information could only be obtained by questioning those involved. In all likelihood, though, this did not detract from gaining an understanding of the college-level planning process.

There were also some lessons learned of an administrative nature. The president of each participating college was asked to appoint a contact person with whom the researcher could work to facilitate the data-gathering process. The president and the contact person were requested to select the individuals to participate in the study. The participants were to be those with college-wide planning responsibilities. The size and composition of this group varied from college to college. To ensure some sense of uniformity of size and composition of the participating groups, the researcher should have been involved in the screening process. The potential existed for only those who were favorably predisposed to the college planning process to be associated with the study.

Another facet of this study that was important related to timing. Specifically, the data-gathering process for most of the colleges occurred in January and February. At that time, senior administrators in colleges are heavily involved in the annual budgeting process. The preoccupation of the participants with this activity made obtaining productive time with them a difficult task. A possible outcome of this concern is that the participants may have been so focused on the budgeting process and its inherent problems that they failed to reflect adequately on the processes associated with long-term planning at the college.

The researcher also gained some insight into the relationship between the college sector and the Alberta Department of Advanced Education. More than one respondent expressed concern over being asked by government to provide the college's intended direction over the next decade without knowing the preferences and plans of the Department with respect to public colleges. On the other hand, senior government administrators appeared to prefer that the colleges' direction for the future be a response to the needs of the communities that they served. College administrators wanted some direction, but not too much so that their autonomy was threatened. Some point of delicate balance must be found between autonomy and accountability in the association between these two groups.

The relationship between the public colleges and the Alberta Department of Advanced Education had another implication for this study. Somewhat prior to the commencement of this study, the Department issued a request that all postsecondary institutions in the province prepare a development plan that would take that institution into the next decade. From the perspective of this study, this request tended to be a complicating factor. A number of participants indicated that they temporarily abandoned their ongoing planning process in order to comply with the request of the Department. Some individuals indicated that their preparation of the plans for the government did not follow the same process that they typically would use, and appeared somewhat confused in terms of the way to respond to the questions of this study. It appeared to the researcher that, in some cases, one or two senior college administrators in isolation prepared the college's development plan in order to satisfy the requirement of the government so that they could get on to more pressing things.

. College administrators can take heart at what this study reveals about the state of institutional planning. This research should be seen as a springboard from which to launch enhanced planning activities. The planning model presented in Figure 7.1 could provide a useful framework. As Benveniste (1990) stated, "Planning is a social invention--fragile, imperfect, and easily confused with something else. It is a social process that can be useful and that can produce significant changes" (p. 286). Although the planning process as described by the normative model is fraught with difficulties in its application, it is a social process that, given a commitment to its use, can result in important changes for colleges. What is needed is the development of dynamic processes which link the long-term views which colleges hold, with short-term action plans that will bring them to fruition. Administrators understand what is required. They need the encouragement and the will to follow through.

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APPENDIX A

An Historical Overview of the Postsecondary Educational System in Alberta

The Alberta Postsecondary Educational System

An Historical Perspective

1903	Alberta College founded in Edmonton by the Methodist church, first institution of higher education in Alberta.
1905	Alberta received provincial status.
1906	University of Alberta (U of A) founded; Calgary Normal School established.
1907	Canadian Union College (originally Alberta Industrial Academy) founded.
1908	U of A began operations.
1909	Alberta College South (later St. Stephen's College) founded in affiliation with the U of A.
1910	The University Act reorganized university administrative structure and provided for college affiliation. Camrose Lutheran College and Mount Royal College founded.
1911	Calgary College and College Saint-Jean founded.
1912	Establishment of Camrose Normal School.
1913	Agricultural Schools Act established schools at Olds, Vermillion, and Claresholm, and a Board of Agricultural Education.
1915	Calgary College closed.
1916	Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (PITA, later SAIT) established.
1920	Establishment of the Edmonton Normal School. Gleichen, Raymond, and Youngstown Schools of Agriculture founded.
1921	Concordia College founded.
1923	Gleichen and Youngstown Schools of Agriculture closed.

1927	St. Joseph's College founded in affiliation with the U of A.
1928	Teacher training delegated to the U of A with the establishment of a School of Education.
1931	School Act provided for the formation of public junior colleges. Claresholm and Raymond Schools of Agriculture closed. Mount Royal College affiliated with the U of A; first true junior college in Alberta.
1933	Creation of the Banff School of Fine Arts by the U of A.
1937	Camrose Normal School closed.
1944	The first federal/provincial Apprenticeship Agreement.
1945	Teacher normal schools incorporated into the U of A Department of Education. U of A, Calgary formed.
1951	Fairview School of Agriculture founded.
1957	Establishment of Lethbridge Junior College.
1958	Public Junior Colleges Act outlined a new comprehensive role for colleges.
1959	Camrose Lutheran College became affiliated with the U of A.
1960	Establishment of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). PITA redesignated Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT).
1962	NAIT began operations.
1963	College St. Jean affiliated with the U of A.
1964	Red Deer Junior College formed.
1965	Medicine Hat College formed. Formation of AVC Calgary and AVC Edmonton from Canadian Vocational Training facilities. Creation of AVC Fort McMurray.

1966	The Universities Act established a separate University of Calgary and created the Universities Commission, and the Universities Coordinating Council. Grande Prairie Junior College established. Mount Royal Junior College Act converted Mount Royal to public status.
1967	University of Lethbridge established. Provincial Board of Postsecondary Education established by amendment to the Junior Colleges Act. Agricultural and Vocational Colleges Act officially redesignated the agricultural schools as colleges with expanded roles. Concordia College affiliated with the U of A.
1969	The Colleges Act established the Colleges Commission, "Junior" was eliminated from college titles, and the college role defined.
1970	Athabasca University founded. Establishment of AVC Grouard and Community Vocational Centres. College St. Jean integrated into the U of A.
1971	Unofficial creation of the Department of Advanced Education. Creation of Grant MacEwan Community College. Canadian Union College Affiliated with the U of A.
1972	Department of Advanced Education Act formally created the department. Athabasca pilot project in distance education began.
1973	Universities and Colleges Commissions were dissolved and their responsibilities placed under the Department. AVC Lac La Biche was established.
1975	Creation of Keyano and Lakeland Colleges. Athabasca University gained permanent status on the basis of a distance education mandate. Transfer of Manpower Division to Advanced Education to for the Department of Advanced Education and Manpower.
1977	Banff Centre Act provided for the autonomous status for Banff Centre.

1978	Fairview, Keyano, Lakeland, and Olds Colleges converted to public status. Apprenticeship training was decentralized beyond the institutes of technology.
1981	The Technical Institutes were constituted under their own acts with Boards of Governors.
1982	Westerra Institute of Technology created at Stony Plain.
1983	Manpower responsibilities withdrawn from Advanced Education.
1986	The Alberta College of Art became an independent institution.
1990	Westerra Institute of Technology became the Westerra Campus of NAIT.

APPENDIX B

The Questionnaire

A Study of Planning in Public Colleges in Alberta

Thank you for participating in this study of college planning in Alberta. The purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the current institutional planning processes in Alberta's public colleges;
2. To document effective planning processes in use; and
3. To identify potential approaches for improving the planning in public colleges.

A set of statements that relate to the practices or philosophies of college planning is attached. Your personal reaction to these statements will provide information with respect to your **current college planning practices**, as well as to the philosophies and practices that, in your view, would guide **desirable forms of college planning.**

For each of these statements, please indicate the extent to which you personally agree that it reflects (A) your **current college planning activities**, and (B) the extent to which you agree that the statement reflects **desirable forms of college planning.**

I will make an appointment to meet with you to discuss matters related to planning at your college. We will use the questions found in this booklet as a base for our discussion.

Please complete these questions prior to our meeting so that your responses can be incorporated into our discussion. I am interested in your opinions, for there are no correct answers to these questions.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at
471-7010 (work) or 464-4274 (home).

Again, thank you for your involvement in this study. Please be assured that anonymity and confidentiality will be respected. Your college will receive a copy of the study when it is completed. The report will be a summary of the findings and will not identify individual respondents.

John Knapp December, 1990

To what extent do you agree that these statements reflect (A) current and (B) desirable approaches to planning at your college? Please circle the appropriate number for A and B

1. ***Your college's mission statement is regularly reviewed and clarified.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

2. ***Your college mission statement is considered more important for public relations than as a guide for the college's future.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

3. ***A clear and articulated vision of what the college is to become is central to your college's planning process.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

4. ***Your college is stable and relatively unchanging so it can withstand a turbulent environment.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

5. *The assessment of your college's strengths and weaknesses is an integral part of college planning.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

6. *Factors external to your college which represent both opportunities and threats are regularly assessed.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

7. *Planning at your college relies primarily on analysis of concrete, objective data.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

8. *Opinions, values, traditions, and aspirations are important considerationns in your college's planning processes.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

9. *Annual budgets largely determine what your college will be doing in the future.*

A. Your Current College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

10. *The governing structure of your college facilitates planning.*

A. Your Current College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

11. *Extrapolation is the primary method for anticipating change in factors external to your college.*

A. Your Current College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

12. *Strengths of specific, competing institutions are assessed regularly.*

A. Your Current College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

13. ***The introduction of new initiatives at your college is usually a reaction to inside influences, such as staff or students.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

14. ***The introduction of new programs at your college is usually a reaction to outside influences, such as competition or government plans.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

15. ***At your college, plans are formulated only after thorough analyses of all relevant factors have been undertaken.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

16. ***Plans at both the department level and the college level are prepared and then integrated to form a comprehensive plan for the college.***

A. Your Current College Planning	B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree	1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree	2 = Disagree
3 = Agree	3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree	4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

17. *Planning processes at your college are participative.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

18. *Plans are consistently made that re-position your college to take advantage of new opportunities.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

19. *Both formulation and implementation stages are present in your college planning process.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

20. *Provision is made during the planning process at your college for prioritizing alternative courses of action.*

A.	Your Current College Planning	B.	Desirable College Planning
	1 = Strongly Disagree		1 = Strongly Disagree
	2 = Disagree		2 = Disagree
	3 = Agree		3 = Agree
	4 = Strongly Agree		4 = Strongly Agree
	9 = Don't Know/No Opinion		9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

21. ***Following the making of college-wide decisions, resources are directed/redirected to ensure that decisions are implemented.***

A. Your Current College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

22. ***Following the implementation of college plans, an evaluation of these plans is carried out and modifications are made as necessary.***

A. Your Current College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

B. Desirable College Planning
1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Agree
4 = Strongly Agree

9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

APPENDIX C

The Interview Guide

Interview Guide

A Study of Planning in Public Colleges in Alberta

Discussion Questions

1. What *prompts* your college to engage in long-term planning?

   Alternatives

   Enrolment changes.

   Financial restraint.

   Alberta Advanced Education requests.

   Forces external to the college.

   Forces internal to the college.

   Other.

2. What groups or structures *internal* to the college influence the planning process? In what way(s) do they do this? To what extent are they incorporated into the planning process?

   Alternatives

   Students.

   Staff/staff associations.

   Program units.

   The organizational structure.

   Collective agreements.

   The Board of Governors.

   Other.

3. What groups or structures *external* to the college influence the planning process? In what way(s) do they do this? To what extent are they incorporated into the planning process?

    Alternatives

    Alberta Advanced Education.

    The Government.

    Accreditation bodies.

    Advisory groups.

    The Board of Governors.

    Employers.

    Others.

4. At your college, which *individuals are responsible* for college-wide planning? What are their specific responsibilities for planning?

    Alternatives

    President.

    Vice-President(s).

    Deans.

    Directors.

    Registrar.

    Others.

5. How do the current *budgeting processes of the Department of Advanced Education* influence your college planning practices?

   Alternatives

   They "drive" all planning efforts.

   They are one of set of factors taken into consideration.

   Other ways/respects.

6. To what extent and in what ways would you say that college planning activities are *political* in nature? (Examples???)

7. In what ways would you *alter the participative nature* of your college planning process? (see Question 17.)

8. What changes would you suggest be made in terms of the *mission statement* and its role in college planning? (see Questions 1 & 2)

9. In what ways (if any) would you say that the *vision for the college* should be developed and utilized differently? (see Question 3)

10. How might your college better integrate the strengths of the college with the opportunities in the environment?

11. In your opinion, what are the strengths of current planning practices at your college?

12. In your opinion, what are the weaknesses of current planning practices at your college?

13. And finally, what changes in planning activities at your college would be required to make them conform to preferred college planning?

Background Information

Institutional Data

(to be obtained from secondary sources)

1. Name of Institution:________________________

2. Enrolment by Program Category:

	Full Time	Part Time
University Transfer		
Diploma		
Certificate		
High School Equiv./Upgrading		
Trade/Vocational		
Apprenticeship		
Other		
Total		

3. Year of Incorporation:__________

4. Staff Complement: Academic: Full Time______Part Time_______

Non-Academic: Full Time______Part Time_____

APPENDIX D

Respondent Information Sheet

Background Information

Respondent Data

1. Name:____________________ Phone:____________

2. Job Title:________________

3. Rank:____________________

4. Length of time in this position:_____years
   (count current year as a full year)

5. Length of time employed at this institution:_____years

6. Length of time employed in postsecondary education:____years

7. Other permanent positions held (postsecondary and otherwise):

Position	Organization
________________	________________
________________	________________
________________	________________

8. Postsecondary Education: Discipline________________

   Highest Level______________

APPENDIX E

Inter-Rater Reliability Form

Inter-Rater (Comment) Reliability Form

Evaluator __

Respondent Number __

To what extent do you agree that these statements reflect the respondent's perception of current college planning? Please circle the appropriate number after reviewing the verbatim comments.
1. *Planning processes at the college are participative.* 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree 9 = Don't Know/No Opinion Verbatim Comments:
2. *The college's mission statement is regularly reviewed and clarified.* 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree 9 = Don't Know/No Opinion Verbatim Comments:
3. *There is a clear understanding of the college's strengths.* 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree 9 = Don't Know/No Opinion Verbatim Comments:
4. *There are groups external to the college which are regularly accessed for advice and input.* 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree 9 = Don't Know/No Opinion Verbatim Comments:

5. *The groups internal to the college that become involved in the process include students, academic and non-academic staff, and administrators.*

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree
3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

Verbatim Comments:

6. *The planning process at the college is a highly political activity.*

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree
3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

Verbatim Comments:

7. *Provision is made during the planning process at the college for regular feedback to all constituents.*

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree
3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

Verbatim Comments:

8. *The annual budgeting policy of the government makes planning for the long term a difficult task.*

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree
3 = Agree 4 = Strongly Agree
9 = Don't Know/No Opinion

Verbatim Comments:

Appendix F

Relationships of Planning Items, Elements, and Phases

Table F.1

The Relationship of the Specific Research Questions to the Sources of Data

Specific research question	Source of data[1]
Context of Planning	
1. What factors, internal and external to the college, motivate planning?	I.1
2. What effect does the Alberta Government's annual budgeting process have on college planning activities?	I.5, Q.9
3. To what extent are college planning activities political in nature?	I.6
4. What structure is used to facilitate college planning? To what extent does the President lead the process?	I.2, I.3, I.4, Q.10
5. To what extent are college planning processes participative? To what extent do participants receive feedback with respect to their contributions to the planning process?	I.7, I.11, Q.17
Process of planning: The strategic phase	
6. To what extent is the college mission statement an integral part of the planning process?	I.8, Q.1, Q.2
7. Is a clear and articulated vision of what the college is to become central to college planning?	I.9, Q.3
8. To what extent and in what ways are internal factors assessed as part of college planning activities?	I.10, Q.4, Q.5, Q.7, Q.8, Q.13, Q.15
9. To what extent and in what ways are factors external to the college assessed as part of college planning activities?	Q.6, Q.11, Q.12, Q.14, Q.18
10. Do planning processes include efforts aimed at prioritizing alternative strategies?	Q.20

Table F.1 (continued)

Specific research question	Source of data[1]
Process of planning: The operational phase	
11. Do colleges include department-level plans in attempts to operationalize their planning processes?	Q.16, Q.19
12. To what extent are resource allocation decisions an integral part of college planning?	Q.21
13. To what extent do colleges engage in processes of evaluation after plans have been implemented?	Q.22
Participants' overall perceptions of planning	
14. What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of current planning practices? What improvements are recommended?	I.12, I.13, I.14

[1] Example: I.1 = Question 1 of the Interview Guide; Q.1 = Question 1 of the questionnaire

Table F.2

Tests for Significant Differences Between the Means for Responses to Questionnaires and Interviews

(N = 57)

Topic	t	p
External assessments	5.225	0.001*
Resource allocation	5.698	0.001*
Vision clarification	3.341	0.002*
Role of annual government budgets	-1.307	0.197
Level of participation	1.137	0.261
Mission statement	0.000	1.000

*$p < .05$

Table F.3

The Relationship of Questionnaire Items to Contextual and Planning Elements

(N = 57)

Element	Questionnaire item
Context	9[a], 10[a], 17[a]
Strategic phase	
Mission statement	1[a], 2
Vision clarification	3[a]
Internal assessments	4, 5[a], 7, 8, 13, 15
External assessments	6[a], 11, 12, 14, 18
Priority setting	20[a]
Operational phase	
Department-level plans	16[a], 19
Resource allocation	21[a]
Formal evaluations	22[a]

[a] Item used to develop planning profile

Table F.4

Correlation Between the Questionnaire Items Associated With the Mission Statement

(N = 57)

Questionnaire Items	r	p
1 - 2	-.328	.015*

* p < .05

Table F.5

Correlations Between Questionnaire Items Associated With Internal Assessments

(N = 57)

	Item					
Item	4	5	7	8	13	15
	Correlation (r)					
4	1.000	.354*	.325*	.135	.049	.260*
5		1.000	.234	.362*	-.045	.367*
7			1.000	.237	.065	.435*
8				1.000	.037	.438*
13					1.000	-.023
15						1.000

* p < .05

Table F.6

Correlations Between Questionnaire Items Associated With External Assessments

(N = 57)

	Item				
Item	6	11	12	14	18
			Correlation (r)		
6	1.000	-.312*	.247	.097	.494*
11		1.000	.028	.275*	-.131
12			1.000	.272*	.073
14				1.000	-.082
18					1.000

* $p < .05$

Table F.7

Correlations Between Items Associated With the Strategic Phase

(N = 57)

	Item				
Item	1	3	5	6	20
			Correlation (r)		
1	1.000	.331*	.256	.029	.131
3		1.000	.517*	.371*	.404*
5			1.000	.548*	.463*
6				1.000	.466*
20					1.000

* $p < .05$

Table F.8

Correlations Between Questionnaire Items Associated With Department-Level Plans

Questionnaire Items	r	p
16 - 19	.411	.002*

* $p < .05$

Table F.9

Correlations Between Items Associated With the Operational Phase

(N = 57)

	Item		
Item	16	21	22
	Correlation (r)		
16	1.000	.207	.412*
21		1.000	.476*
22			1.000

* p < .05

Table F.10

Correlations Between Items Associated With the Both Phases of Planning

(N = 57)

	Item (Strategic phase)				
Item (Operational Phase)	1	3	5	6	20
	Correlation (r)				
16	.134	.210	.367*	.461*	.449*
21	.318*	.392*	.376*	.109	.416*
22	.251	.376*	.452*	.445*	.421*

* p < .05

Table F.11

Correlations Between Items for Current and Desirable Forms of Planning

(N = 57)

Questionnaire Item	r	p
1	.734	.000[*]
3	.517	.000[*]
5	.314	.022[*]
6	.164	.245
16	.038	.783
20	.381	.005[*]
21	.373	.005[*]
22	.293	.039[*]

[*] p < .05

Table F.12

Tests for Significant Differences Between the Means for Responses to Current and Desirable Forms of Planning

(N = 57)

Question	t	p
1	-5.480	0.000*
2	1.968	0.058
3	-6.380	0.000*
4	-4.680	0.000*
5	-6.934	0.000*
6	-5.708	0.000*
7	-5.167	0.000*
8	-1.873	0.070
9	3.447	0.002*
10	-6.093	0.000*
11	1.529	0.136
12	-7.136	0.000*
13	1.873	0.070
14	-1.000	0.325
15	-6.702	0.000*
16	-6.442	0.000*
17	-4.871	0.000*
18	-4.890	0.000*
19	-6.208	0.000*
20	-6.744	0.000*
21	-5.524	0.000*
22	-6.405	0.000*

*p < .05

Table F.13

The Correlation of Selected Contextual, Institutional, and Demographic Variables With the College Planning Index

Variable	N[a]	r	p
The participative nature of planning	57	0.373	0.005*
The college's governing structure	57	0.234	0.045*
Time in current position	57	-0.264	0.047*
Time at college	57	-0.234	0.080
Age of the college	8	-0.615	0.104
Respondent's highest level of education	57	-0.217	0.108
The extent of feedback to participants	57	0.257	0.114
Time in postsecondary education	57	-0.182	0.180
Number of participants	8	-0.494	0.214
Position level in the college	57	-0.145	0.283
Government's annual budgeting process	57	-0.092	0.505
Number of full-time staff	8	0.226	0.591
The size of the annual budget	8	0.201	0.633
Percentage grant of annual budget	8	0.190	0.653
The political nature of planning	57	0.067	0.660
The annual government grant	8	0.170	0.688
Number of full-time students	8	-0.048	0.909

*$p < .05$

[a] N = 57 refers to individual respondents; N = 8 refers to the colleges.

APPENDIX G

Letter to College Presidents

November 12, 1990

Dear President ____________;

As you are well aware, there are many pressures and tensions in the postsecondary system in general and colleges in particular. It is perhaps more important than ever that colleges give attention to planning.

A doctoral student under my supervision, John Knapp, is about to embark on a study of college planning. John has been associated with postsecondary education in Alberta for the past 15 years in various capacities, and would appreciate including your college in his study. The primary purposes of the study are:

1. To examine the current institutional planning processes in public colleges in Alberta;
2. To document effective planning processes in use; and
3. To identify potential approaches to improving the planning processes in public colleges.

Your college's participation in the study would involve 40-60 minute interviews with its senior administrative officials. These individuals would include yourself and others who have college-wide planning involvement. As well, it would be helpful if you were to identify a liaison person with whom John can work to arrange the interviews. He anticipates beginning the study within the next two or three weeks.

John will call your office regarding your willingness to participate. Assuming your response is affirmative, he would require the name of his contact person at that time.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at 492-7625 or John at 471-7010 (work) or 464-4274 (home).

As is usual with all doctoral studies today, ethical guidelines for research will be followed. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured. As well, all participating colleges will be given a copy of the results.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Your sincerely,

Eugene W. Ratsoy
Professor and Chair

CURRICULUM VITAE

Curriculum Vitae of John L. Knapp, October 1991

Academic Background:

1989-present: Doctoral candidate in the Educational Administration Department - University of Alberta .

1971-1973: MA in Economics. Major in Resource Economics. Thesis topic- Industrial water use in Alberta: A qualitative and quantitative analysis - University of Alberta.

1966-1970: B.Sc. in Agricultural Economics - University of Alberta.

Work Experience - Academic:

1988-present: Consultant with Program Development Services at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT). Responsibilities include:

- Curriculum validation
- Program needs assessments
- Staff development workshops
- Stakeholder perception studies

1982-1988: Assistant Program Head - Marketing Program (NAIT). Responsibilities included:

- maintenance of student academic records (200 students annually)
- consultation with students on academic matters
- design and manage a Post-Diploma business program

Instructor - teaching duties included:

- Marketing, Marketing Research
- Statistics, Business Mathematics
- Economics

1977-1978: Instructor - NAIT (one year contract)

1974-1975: Instructor - NAIT (one year contract)

1974-present: Economics lecturer (part-time) for the University of Alberta, Faculty of Extension and the Economics Department.

Work Experience - Non Academic:

1978-1982: Sales/Sales Management - Life Insurance and Employee Benefit Programs

1975-1977: Automotive Industry - Owner/Manager of a General Motors Dealership in Veteran, Alberta.

1970-1974: Resource Economist - Alberta Department of Agriculture. Duties included:

- Cost/Benefit analysis of major land projects
- Flood damage estimate studies
- Tourist perception studies